Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qur'an

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by:

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In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	ah
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـَ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

Publisher's Note

To enhance the readability of the text for English-speaking readers, the editors have opted to employ English names for the prophets and figures (including those listed below and others) and to utilize Anglicized terms that are now recognized in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsā	Moses
Dāwūd	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Hārūn	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibrāhīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūnus	Jonah
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Yūsuf	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Lūt	Lot	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imāms, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

Foreword

The expanse of Islamic scholarship is replete with endeavors to understand the divine message of the Qur'an, and among these, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* stands as a towering testament to a lifetime of scholarly pursuit. Volume 38 of this monumental work presents an incisive interpretation of chapters 58 through 69, offering readers a comprehensive examination that is as spiritually enriching as it is intellectually rigorous.

Sūrah Al-Mujādilah opens the discourse with a nuanced discussion on social justice, addressing the pre-Islamic practice of *al-ẓihār* (a specific pagan divorce practice) and transitioning into the etiquettes of private and communal conversations. This Sūrah , with its Medinan roots, sets a tone of reform and guidance that resonates throughout the subsequent chapters.

In Sūrah Al-Ḥashr, the narrative of Banu al-Naḍīr's exile not only recounts a pivotal moment in Islamic history but also serves as a parable for the consequences of broken covenants and the virtuous path of vigilance and self-accountability. The closing verses of this chapter are particularly poignant, extolling the names and attributes of God in a manner that elevates the discourse from historical account to theological reflection.

Sūrah Al-Mumtaḥana brings to the fore the complexities of political and social alliances within the Islamic ethos, juxtaposing the realities of Medinan society against the divine commandments that seek to foster a community anchored in faith and integrity.

The call to action in Sūrah Al-Ṣaff is emphatic, rallying the believers to rise in the path of God, echoing the resolute spirit of a community destined to uphold the banner of Islam against all odds. The mention of Jesus son of Mary and his glad tidings of Prophet Muḥammad reinforces the continuity of prophetic missions and the unity of divine message across different epochs.

With Sūrah Al-Jumuʿah, the *tafsīr* explores the significance of the Friday prayer as a symbol of communal identity and spiritual renewal. The chapter's exhortation to prioritize divine remembrance over worldly pursuits captures the essence of a believer's weekly spiritual rejuvenation.

The portrayal of the hypocrites in Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn is a sobering reminder of the internal challenges that beset the early Muslim community, while Sūrah Al-Taghābun broadens this examination to the universal trials of faith and destiny, prompting a reflection on divine justice and human agency.

Sūrah Al-Talāq and Sūrah Al-Taḥrīm delve into the personal laws

governing familial relationships, offering guidance that is both pragmatic and compassionate, while never losing sight of the moral and spiritual dimensions that underlie these legislations.

In a shift to the cosmological, Sūrah Al-Mulk presents a vivid tableau of God's sovereign mastery over the universe, inviting contemplation on the signs of divine magnificence and the human place within the grand cosmic order.

Sūrah Al-Qalam stands as an affirmation of the Prophet's moral fortitude, reassuring him in the face of accusation and adversity, and Sūrah Al-Ḥaqqah concludes this volume with a stark depiction of the Day of Resurrection, a theme that serves as a constant reminder of the transient nature of worldly life and the reality of the hereafter.

The task of translating these profound narratives and divine injunctions has been undertaken with great scholarly rigor and dedication. **Dr. Amina Inloes** has lent her linguistic expertise to the translation of Chapters 65, 66, and 68, imbuing the text with a clarity that brings the original Arabic to life for English-speaking audiences. **Afzal Sumar** has meticulously rendered Chapters 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, and 67, with a keen eye for the subtleties and nuances that characterize the rich tapestry of Qur'anic language.

The **Tawheed Institute Australia** has completed this collective effort with the translation of Chapters 59 and 69, contributing to the volume's tapestry with their unique scholarly perspective and linguistic precision.

The work of these dedicated scholars has been instrumental in bringing the wisdom of *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* to an English-speaking audience, ensuring that the translation is not just a transference of words, but a conveyance of meanings, replete with the nuances and depths intended by ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī.

Readers are encouraged to engage with this volume not just as a text of historical and legal significance, but as a spiritual companion that offers timeless wisdom and guidance. In the pages that follow, one encounters the interplay of divine command and human response, the unfolding of historical events with theological implications, and the ever-present call to embody the Qur'an's teachings in one's daily life.

As we navigate the complex landscape of contemporary issues, the teachings encapsulated in these chapters remain as relevant as ever, calling upon us to reflect, understand, and implement the divine guidance in the journey towards a life of righteousness and spiritual fulfillment.

Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd.
December 2023

Chapter 58

Sūrah Al-Mujādilah (The Woman who Disputes)

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بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Introduction

This chapter discusses a brilliant variety of themes such as judgments, manners, and characteristics. Thus a part of it relates to the judgment regarding *al-ẓihār* (a specific pagan divorce practice), and another part relates to the judgment regarding secret conversations, and the judgment regarding the manner of sitting in a gathering. This is while another part relates to the characteristics of those who act contrary to and oppose God and His Messenger, and the characteristics of those who befriend the enemies of the faith. It also describes those among the believers who guard against befriending the enemies of the faith, and promises them a handsome reward in the world and the hereafter. This chapter is of Medinan provenance in light of the content of its verses.

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Verses 1-6

قَدۡ سَمِعَ ٱللَّهُ قَوۡلَ ٱلَّتِي تُجَٰدِلُكَ فِي زَوۡجِهَا وَتَشۡتَكِيٓ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَٱللَّهُ يَسۡمَعُ تَحَاوُرَكُمَآۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ سَمِيعُۢ بَصِيرٌ ١

(58:1) Allah has indeed heard the speech of the woman who argues and disputes with you regarding her husband and complains vigorously to Allah. Allah hears the arguments of you both. Allah is surely Hearing, Seeing.

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Majmaʿ al-bayān defines the word *al-ishtikā* as "(making a vigorous complaint by) manifesting or revealing a misfortune or a hateful, abhorrent thing that a person suffers." This is while the word *al-shikāya* is defined as "(making a complaint by) manifesting or revealing what someone does to a person of a hateful, abhorrent thing." The word *al-taḥāwur* means "the back and forth of speech; the bandying of words, one with another; to return answer(s) to one another, which is to have a debate; to carry on a discussion; to hold a dialogue;

to have a dispute/argument/conversation (*al-muḥāwara*)." It is said *ḥāwarahu muḥāwaratan* which means: "he returned him answer(s) for answer(s) or bandied words with him in the sense of holding a dialogue or a dispute or a debate, and hence the two had a dialogue or an argument or a colloquy, one with another."

The first four or six verses of this chapter descended with respect to the practice of *al-ẓihār*, which was a kind of divorce among the pre-Islamic *jāhilī* Arabs. A man would say to his wife 'you are to me like the back of my mother' (*anti minnī ka ẓahri ummī*). Consequently, she would become separated from him as well as become prohibited to him permanently.[1] One of the *anṣār* had divorced his wife in this manner and later regretted it and so his wife came to the Messenger of God, asking him about a resolution regarding it, arguing with him and complaining vigorously to God about it, hoping that she would find a way to allow her husband to return to her, which is when these verses were revealed.

The meaning of 'hearing' (*al-sam'*) in the (beginning) part of this verse that says *Allah has indeed heard the speech of the woman...* means a response to the plea/complaint made by the woman and the fulfilment of the need expressed by her, in the rhetorical form of metonymy (*al-kināya*).[2] Such a rhetorical usage is widespread, and the evidence for such an understanding of the relevant part of this verse is the subsequent part of this verse that says *...the woman who argues and disputes with you regarding her husband and complains vigorously to Allah...* where it is apparent that the wife intended a way out of the predicament (she and her husband found themselves in) such that she would not become separated from her husband. As for the (end) part of this verse which reads *Allah hears the arguments of you both...*, the meaning of 'hearing' (*al-sam'*) here is the well-known (common) meaning for it.

Hence the meaning obtained is: 'God has accepted and responded to the plea of the woman who argues and disputes with you (O Muḥammad) regarding her husband—he who divorced her according to the (repugnant, pagan)

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1 Translator's note: Customarily, the invocation of this practice meant that the husband was now free of all duties toward the wife, but that his wife was not free to leave her husband and contract another marriage!

2 Translator's note: This is a rhetorical device where one word is substituted with another with which it is associated. For example, in the famous saying 'the pen is mightier than the sword' the word 'pen' is a metonymy for 'writing' while the word 'sword' is a metonymy for 'violence'. This feature is often used to hint at a matter which does not need to be expressed explicitly. Some examples from the Qur'an are the word *yaqīn* (certainty) for death in 74:47, the word *ghā'iṭ* (low land) for a privy in 5:6, the word *ḥijaj* (pilgrimages) for years in 28:27, the word *sab'a* (seven) for the meaning of multiples in 31:27.

custom of *al-ẓihār*—and complains vigorously to God of her grief and sorrow and of what had befallen her of misfortune. Furthermore, God hears the arguments that transpired between you both, surely God hears the voices and sees with perspicacity and insight.'

الَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْكُمْ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ مَا هُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِهِمْ ۖ إِنْ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّائِي وَلَدْنَهُمْ ۚ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَقُولُونَ مُنْكَرًا مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَزُورًا ۚ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُورٌ ﴿٢﴾

(58:2) Those (men) from you who divorce their wives by likening their backs to the backs of their mothers, they (the wives) are not their mothers; their mothers are not save those who gave them birth; and most surely they (the men) utter a hateful word and a falsehood, and most surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving.

This verse negates the notion of *al-ẓihār* which was well-known among the Arabs, and nullifies its effect as (a valid) divorce, as well as nullifying the ensuing permanent prohibition (of the wife to the husband) that occurred due to it. It does this by negating the (notion of the) motherhood of the wife due to the practice of *al-ẓihār.* This is because the custom of the pre-Islamic times (*al-jāhiliyya*) adjoined the wife to the mother, or to motherhood, due to the practice of *al-ẓihār* and consequently the wife would become permanently forbidden to her husband just as a mother is forbidden to her son.

The clause, *...they* (*the wives*) *are not their mothers...* has the meaning of negating the notion of the motherhood of the supposedly divorced wives in the eyes of the religious law, in the sense that the supposedly divorced wives (by means of the practice of *al-ẓihār*) could be considered mothers or could be attached to them from the perspective of religious law and consequently rendered permanently forbidden to their husbands. Thereafter, the verse emphasizes this negation by saying *...their mothers are not save those who gave them birth;* meaning the mothers of their husbands are not save those who gave them birth.

Then, this verse affirms this negation a second time. This comes across from the emphatic context of the verse where it says *...and most surely they* (the men) *utter a hateful word and a falsehood,* meaning that these husbands who invoke the practice of *al-ẓihār* are certainly uttering what is rejected and hateful of speech (*munkaran min al-qawl*) whence the religious law (*al-shar'*) rejects it since it doesn't recognize it and doesn't prescribe it, and similarly it is falsehood (*al-zūr*) in light of the fact that this practice disagrees with religious law (*al-shar'*) just as it does not conform to external reality in the world. Thus the verse means that the practice of *al-ẓihār* does not signify divorce (at all) although that does not negate the obligation of discharging expiation (*al-kaffāra*) on the part of the husband if he wishes to resume sexual relations with his wife after

having invoked *al-ẓihār*. This is because the marital status remains in place even if sexual relations are forbidden before discharging expiation (*al-kaffāra*).

The ending sentence *...and most surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving...* contains evidence that this practice is in the nature of a sin (but) worthy of being forgiven, however the mention of expiation (*al-kaffāra*) in the succeeding verses along with the end part (of the second of the next two verses) which says *...and those are Allah's limits while the disbelievers shall have a painful punishment* (58:4) perhaps proves that the forgiveness is conditional to discharging the expiation (*al-kaffāra*).

وَالَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا قَالُوا فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَتَمَاسَّا
ذَٰلِكُمْ تُوعَظُونَ بِهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٣﴾

(58:3) And (as for) those who divorce their wives by likening their backs to the backs of their mothers then go back on what they have said should consequently free a captive before they touch each other; to that are you (all) admonished (to conform); and Allah is Well-Aware of what you (all) do.

This verse is in the meaning of a conditional sentence which is why the particle *fa* occurs in the predicate since the latter is in the meaning of the apodosis. Thus the meaning obtained is: 'those men who divorce their wives by invoking the practice of *al-ẓihār* then wish to go back on what they had said must consequently free a slave.'

The clause, *...before they touch each other...* means that the judgment in this verse is for the one who invoked *al-ẓihār* then wished to return to the state which he was in before invoking *al-ẓihār* (which was when he could touch her (meaning, he could have sexual relations with her)), which is the contextual evidence that the intent of *...then go back on what they have said...* is to intend to go back and repeal what they had endorsed by means of *al-ẓihār*.

Consequently, the meaning obtained is: 'those men who divorce their wives by likening their wives' backs to the backs of their mothers then wish to go back on what they had said of the formula of *al-ẓihār,* thereby nullifying it *by engaging in sexual relations* with their wives then it is incumbent on them to free a slave before they both touch each other.'

It is suggested that the phrase *...then go back on what they have said...* refers to the men's regret (*al-nadm*) for having invoked *al-ẓihār* in which case such an interpretation is valid if it is considered to be *what is understood from its meaning* (*outlined above*) and not that it *is* the meaning of the phrase *...then go back on what they have said...* (for the meaning of the relevant phrase is to go back on what they had said of the formula of *al-ẓihār,* nullifying it by *engaging in sexual*

relations, which would in turn signify the men's regret for what they had done).

It is also suggested that the phrase ...*then go back on what they have said*... means them repeating what they had uttered (previously) of the formula of *al-ẓihār* in the sense that they should repeat it a second time. Such an understanding would necessitate the obligation of expiation (*al-kaffāra*) to always apply to the second utterance of *al-ẓihār* rather than to the first while the verse in question does not signify that. In addition the (Prophetic) practice took into account the materialization of *al-ẓihār* rather than its multiplicity.

Thereafter the verse is brought to a close by the statement ...*to that are you* (*all*) *admonished* (*to conform*)*; and Allah is Well-Aware of what you* (*all*) *do.* This is a declaration that what God has instructed of expiation (*al-kaffāra*) was an order from Him in favor of it due to His knowledge of their action. Thus the expiation (*al-kaffāra*) was the thing due to which what had befallen them of the (adverse) effect/consequence of their deed would be removed.

فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَتَمَاسَّا ۖ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَإِطْعَامُ سِتِّينَ مِسْكِينًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ ۗ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٤﴾

(58:4) But whoever does not find the wherewithal (to do that) then let him fast two consecutive months before they touch each other, and whoever is unable to do (even that) then let him feed sixty needy people. That is so that you may have faith in Allah and His Messenger, and those are Allah's limits while the disbelievers shall have a painful punishment.

This verse contains a second characteristic of the expiation (*al-kaffāra*) determined. Its description comes subsequent to the first characteristic for whoever is unable to discharge the first kind of expiation (*al-kaffāra*). This second characteristic is fasting for two consecutive months before the husband and wife may touch each other while the recurrence of the condition ...*before they touch each other*... in this verse is in order to remove all doubt that this condition is only limited to the first kind of expiation (*al-kaffāra*). The words in this verse that read ...*and whoever is unable to do* (*even that*) *then let him feed sixty needy people*... enunciate the third characteristic of the expiation (*al-kaffāra*) determined for whoever is unable to fast two consecutive months. He has to feed sixty needy people, and all the details of these conditions may be found in the works of Islamic law.

The statement, *That is so that you may have faith in Allah and His Messenger*... means that 'what We have passed of the judgment (against *al-ẓihār*),

and what We have made incumbent of expiation (*al-kaffāra*) thus maintaining the marital bond and setting forth expiation (*al-kaffāra*) for whoever wishes to return to the previous state of being able to enjoy marital relations, is in the form of requital or penalty for what a man may bring forth of the norms and customs of the pre-Islamic *jāhiliyya;* all that is so that you may all believe in God and His Messenger and so that you may reject the fallacious, invalid customs.'

...and those are Allah's limits (ḥudūd allāh) *while the disbelievers shall have a painful punishment: Ḥadd al-shay* (lit: the limit of a thing) means 'the point at which something terminates and does not exceed or go beyond it.' Its original meaning is 'prevention and barring (*al-man'*).' The meaning therefore is: 'what We have made incumbent of the characteristics (of expiation (*al-kaffāra*)) or what We have laid down of judgments are the limits of God (*ḥudūd allāhi*), so do not transgress or go beyond them by opposing them while the disbelievers (*al-kāfirīn*) shall have a painful punishment (*'adhābun alīmun*) for opposing and violating what We have laid down as judgments in respect of *al-ẓihār* or what We have legislated of judgments in respect of *al-ẓihār*.'

It is apparent that the meaning of *al-kufr* in this verse (a reference to *al-kāfirīn*—disbelievers) is to reject the judgment or verdict (of God) and to take the practice of *al-ẓihār* as an acceptable and effective norm. What supports such an understanding is the part of this verse that says *That is so that you may have faith in Allah and His Messenger...* meaning: "acquiesce or submit that God's judgment is right, and that it is the truth, and that His Messenger is truthful and trustworthy in what he conveys (of God's teachings)." God has (further) affirmed this (message) by *...and those are Allah's limits...* It is also possible that the intent of the word *al-kufr* is to reject and disavow at the level of action, which is tantamount to rebellion and disobedience.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادُّونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ كُبِتُوا كَمَا كُبِتَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ وَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ ۚ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ۝٥

(58:5) Surely those who oppose Allah and His Messenger shall be overwhelmed and disgraced as those before them were overwhelmed and disgraced; and indeed We have revealed clear communications, and the disbelievers shall have a humiliating punishment.

The word *al-muḥādda* means 'dissension, acting contrary to, opposition' while the word *al-kabt* means 'humiliation, suppression, overcoming, bringing low/dishonoring, and debasement.'

Although this verse and the next could be understood to be the start of a new theme and a new conversation which enunciate the matter of opposing God and His Messenger, from the perspective of its consequence and effect,

but the (literary) context suggests that these two verses are (actually carrying on with the same theme and conversation as the previous verse and are) in the context of explaining the end part of the preceding verse which conveys the prohibition of opposing God and His Messenger. Thus the meaning obtained is: 'We surely ordered you to believe in God and His Messenger and forbade you from transgressing and violating the limits of God and rejecting them. This is because those who oppose God and His Messenger by means of dissent shall be humiliated and abased just as those before them were humiliated and debased.'

Thereafter God emphasizes (this message) by saying *...and indeed We have revealed clear communications, and the disbelievers shall have a humiliating punishment,* meaning: 'there is no doubt that these communications are from Us and there is no doubt that Our Messenger is truthful and trustworthy in what he preaches and conveys of Our communications while for those who disbelieve in them and reject them, there is a humiliating and debasing punishment (which awaits).'

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا ۚ أَحْصَاهُ اللَّهُ وَنَسُوهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿٦﴾

(58:6) On the day when Allah shall raise them up all together, then inform them of what they did: Allah has recorded it while they have forgotten it; and Allah is a witness over all things.

The beginning statement, *On the day when Allah shall raise them up all together, then inform them of what they did...* explicates the point in time (*ẓarf al-zamān*) for *...while the disbelievers shall have a painful punishment* (58:4), meaning that the disbelievers shall be subjected to a painful punishment on the day when God shall resurrect them all together. That is the day of reckoning, reward, and requital when He will inform them of the reality of all that they had done in the world.

The word *al-iḥṣā* means 'the comprehensive and complete knowledge and encompassing cognizance of the number of things without anything of it being lost.' Al-Rāghib defines the word *al-iḥṣā'* to mean 'attaining, obtaining, or achieving the number.' He writes: 'It is said *aḥṣaytu kadhā* meaning: "I counted thus."' (He continues to write): 'The word *al-iḥṣā'* is derived from *al-ḥaṣā* meaning pebbles or small stones and its usage in the meaning of counting is from the perspective that they (the Arabs) used to rely on pebbles and small stones in the matter of counting just as we rely on fingers to count.'

The ending statement, *...and Allah is a witness over all things...* occurs as an explanation for the part of this verse that says *... Allah has recorded it,* while the meaning of God being a witness over all things has been clarified at the end

of Sūrah Fussilat.

Examining Narrations

(1) Ā'isha said: 'Blessed is the One whose hearing encompasses everything—I was surely listening to Khawla bint Thaʿlaba's speech although some of it was obscured to me—and she was complaining about her husband to the Messenger of God. She was saying "Messenger of God, he (my husband) wore out my youth (or used me when I was young and youthful) while I bore him many children up until when I grew old and was no longer able to bear children, (which is when) he divorced me by likening me to the back of his mother. O God, I complain to You." She continued in this manner till Gabriel descended with these verses *Allah has indeed heard the statement of her who argues and disputes with you regarding her husband...* (58:1) and he (the husband) was Aws ibn al-Ṣāmit.'[1]

Author's comment: Reports containing this explanation and transmitted via Sunni chains of transmission are many indeed. However, they differ regarding the name of the woman in question and the name of her father as well as differing with respect to the name of her husband and his father. The more well-known name for her is Khawla bint Thaʿlaba while the more well-known name for her husband is Aws ibn al-Ṣāmit al-Anṣāri. ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī has cited a report which contains an abridged version of this anecdote while he has transmitted another report in this regard which shall be presented to you shortly.

(2) *Majmaʿ al-bayān* explains the verse *And* (*as for*) *those who divorce their wives by likening their backs to the backs of their mothers then go back on what they have said...*(58:3) as follows: 'The Imāms of Guidance from the progeny of Muḥammad have interpreted and understood the part of this verse that mentions "going back on what they have said" to mean the intent to have sexual intercourse and the repealing of the statement of *al-ẓihār* that he (the husband) had uttered. This is because sexual intercourse is not permissible to him (the husband) except after discharging expiation (*al-kaffāra*), and the judgment regarding his first statement is not cancelled or nullified except after discharging expiation (*al-kaffāra*).'

(3) Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir: 'A Muslim woman came to the Prophet and said "Messenger of God, such and such a person is my husband. I bore him

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Māja, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and al-Ḥākim, where the latter has authenticated it, and Ibn Mardawayhi and al-Bayhaqi, from her.

many children and supported him in his worldly and hereafterly affairs. He did not have an occasion to experience anything hateful or abhorrent from me. I complain to you about him." He (the Prophet) said: "What are you complaining to me about him?" She replied: "He said to me 'you are prohibited to me just as the back of my mother' (*anti ʿalayya ḥarāmun ka-ẓahri ummī*) and he has thrown me out of my house, so look into my problem." The Messenger of God said to her "God has not revealed a divine revelation/instruction (*kitāban*) which I may use to judge between you and your husband, while I dislike being from those who undertake a significant responsibility on themselves (without due authority)." So she began to cry and complain about her predicament to God and to the Messenger of God, and left.' The Imām continues: 'Thus God heard her argumentative discourse with the Messenger of God in respect of her husband and what she complained to him, and consequently, He revealed a recital "*In the name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate. Allah has indeed heard the statement of her who argues and disputes with you regarding her husband...* (58:1) up until *...and most surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving* (58:2)." "The Imām continues: 'And so, the Messenger of God sent for the woman who came to him. He said to her: "Bring your husband to me" and so she did. He (the Messenger of God) asked him: "Did you say to your wife 'you are prohibited to me as the back of my mother?' (*anti ḥarāmun ʿalayya ka-ẓahri ummī*)?" He replied in the affirmative, whereupon the Messenger of God said to him "God has revealed a recital (Qur'anic instruction (*qur'ānan*)) regarding you and your wife," and he recited "*In the name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate. Allah has indeed heard the statement of her who argues and disputes with you regarding her husband...* (58:1) up until *...and most surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving* (58:2)." So join your wife to yourself for you have surely uttered a hateful word and a falsehood (*munkaran min al-qawli wa zūrā*), however God has pardoned and forgiven you, so do not repeat it again.' The Imām continues: 'So, the man left while regretting what he had said to his wife. God subsequently disliked such a practice for the believers, and revealed *And* (*as for*) *those who divorce their wives by likening their backs to the backs of their mothers then go back on what they have said...* (58:3) meaning what the man had said to his wife, which was "you are to me like the back of my mother" (*anti ʿalayya ka ẓahri ummī*).' The Imām continues: 'So whoever said it after God had pardoned and forgiven the first person then it is incumbent

> on such a person to *...consequently free a captive before they touch each other...* meaning (before) having sexual relations with her. *...To that you are admonished* (*to conform*)*; and Allah is Well-Aware of what you do* (58:3). *But whoever does not find the wherewithal* (*to do that*) *then let him fast two consecutive months before they touch each other, and whoever is unable to do* (*even that*) *then let him feed sixty needy people* (58:4). Thus God laid down the penalty (*al-ʿuqūba*) for whoever invoked the practice of *al-ẓihār* after this prohibition. Thereafter, God said *That is so that you may have faith in Allah and His Messenger and those are Allah's limits...*(58:4).' The Imām said: 'this is the penalty (*al-ḥadd*) for (the crime of) *al-ẓihār.*'[1]

Author's comment: The verse (58:2) and what it has of a (literary) context (in the form of the succeeding verses), especially what it contains in its end part, of the mention of pardon and forgiveness, is closer in conformity (to this literary context) than what is given as a context in the anecdote in this report. And although the report has no problem, even from the perspective of its chain of transmission, yet it does not conform to the apparent sense of the verse *And* (*as for*) *those who divorce their wives by likening their backs to the backs of their mothers then go back on what they have said should consequently free a captive before they touch each other; to that you are admonished* (*to conform*)*; and Allah is Well-Aware of what you do* (58:3).

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1 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, on the authority of ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Abī ʿAbdillāh, on the authority of al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb, on the authority of Abū Wallād, on the authority of Ḥumrān from him.

Verses 7-13

This section of the chapter contains verses with respect to secret conversations, and some manners relating to social interaction.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَىٰ ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا
هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ذَٰلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ
أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا ۖ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

(58:7) Do you not see that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth? Nowhere is there a secret counsel between three persons but He is the fourth of them, nor (between) five but He is the sixth of them, nor less than that nor more but He is with them wheresoever they are; then He will inform them of what they did on the day of resurrection: surely Allah is Cognizant of all things.

The question in the verse, *Do you not see that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth?* is in a rhetorical style which aims to convey censure, disapproval, rebuke, and condemnation (by the speaker) coupled with surprise (on the speaker's part in respect of a deed by the addressee, which is not befitting him/her (which in this case refers to the act of secret counsels and conversations)). This kind of rhetorical interrogative is known as *al-istifhām al-inkāriy*, while the phrase *Do you not see...* figuratively means certain, definite knowledge, (and therefore means 'do you not certainly and definitely know..?'). The beginning part of this verse is explained by the subsequent part in that God is present and participating with those who engage in secret conversations.

The word *al-najwā* which occurs in this verse is a verbal noun and means 'to carry on a whispered conversation, to converse intimately and confidentially; a secret conversation,' while the masculine third person singular personal pronoun (*huwa*—He) that recurs in this verse refers to God. The phrases 'fourth of them' (*rābi'uhum*) and 'sixth of them' (*sādisuhum*), which occur in this verse, mean, to render three, four and to render five, six. This happens by God participating in knowledge with those who engage in whispered, secret conversations, regarding what they secretly confide in with each other, and it means Him being present with them in knowledge, awareness, and acquaintance with what they secretly converse. This is (further) attested by the (two) statements that encompass this narrative (which narrative occurs in the middle of the verse). These two statements are: the interrogative statement at the beginning of this verse *Do you not see that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth...* and the emphatic statement at its end *...surely Allah is Cognizant of all things*.

...nor less than that nor more: Means: 'nor less than what is mentioned of number or more than what is mentioned of number'. Thus by means of these two words ('less' and 'more') the narrative encompasses all possible numbers of secret conferrers. If 'less than that' then less than three would be two while less than five would be four and as for 'more than that' then more than five would be six and beyond that number.

Moreover, from the delicate and graceful style of this verse is the arrangement of the numbers three, four, five, and six in it without repetition. Thus the verse did not say 'nowhere is there a secret counsel between three persons but He is the fourth of them nor (between) four but He is the fifth of them,' and so on.

The statement *...but He is with them wheresoever they are...* means God is with those who engage in whispered, secret conversations from the perspective of knowledge regarding what they confer in private, and participates with them in that. Therefore it becomes apparent that the meaning of God being the fourth of three secret conferrers and the sixth of five secret conferrers is Him being with them from the perspective of knowledge, and Him participating with them in terms of awareness, and in terms of an acquaintance with what they secretly confide in with each other. It does not mean a similarity or identicalness with them in completing the number. This is because each of the secret conferrers is a single human being in body whereby joining that person to its like would make them two, and joining the two to their like would render them three while God is far beyond corporeality, and free from materiality. (Hence God being with the secret conferrers means Him knowing, being aware, and being well-acquainted with what they secretly confer, and not that He is with them in terms of body like another human being, for corporeality and materiality is denied for Him).

And that is because the literary context necessitates that the exception in the verse, *Nowhere is there a secret counsel between three persons but He is the fourth of them, nor* (*between*) *five but He is the sixth of them, nor less than that nor more but He is with them wheresoever they are...* has one meaning, which is that no secret counsel or private conversation is hidden from God. Thus the statements *...but He is the fourth of them,* and *...but He is the sixth of them* are in the meaning of *...but He is with them wheresoever they are...* which is a knowledge-based accompaniment (*al-maʿiyya al-ʿilmiyya*), meaning that He surely partakes with them in knowledge and associates with them in it, or that His is a presence-based accompaniment (*al-maʿiyya al-wujūdiyya*) in the sense that wherever a group of people is assumed to gather for secret conversations then God is there, Hearing, Knowing.

The clause *...wheresoever they are...* refers to all places in general since if God accompanies those who engage in secret counsel on the basis of knowledge

and not on the basis of spatial or bodily accompaniment then situations do not vary or differ for Him due to differences in place in terms of nearness and distance. This is because no place is empty of God while He is not confined to a specific place.

It also becomes clear from the foregoing that what the verse avails in terms of meaning regarding the accompaniment of God with those who engage in secret conversations, and Him being the fourth of three secret conferrers and the sixth of five secret conferrers, does not negate what has been explained in detail with regards to the verse *They certainly disbelieve who say: Surely Allah is the third* (*person*) *of the three; there is no god but the one Allah, and if they do not desist from what they say, then a painful chastisement shall befall those among them who disbelieve* (5:73). (This is because it negates the trinity) in the sense that His unity/oneness (*al-wiḥda*) is not from the perspective of number (*al-wiḥda al-ʿadadiyya*) rather it is from the perspective of uniqueness, singularity, matchlessness, and being without peer (*al-wiḥda al-aḥadiyya*) such that it is impossible to assume for one possessing such oneness/unity to have a second. Thus the meaning of God being with the secret conferrers, and as the fourth of three and as the sixth of five is that He is cognizant (*ʿālim*) of what they confide in with each other in secrecy and privacy, and that what they hide from others is manifest, exposed, and apparent to Him and not that God has a finite, limited existence which entertains numerical identity where it is possible to assume a second and a third for Him, and so on (and thus, the explanation for this verse and that for (5:73) do not contradict each other).

The statement *...then He will inform them of what they did on the day of resurrection...* means God shall inform them of the reality of what they had done of deeds, which includes their secret conversations, while the clause *...surely Allah is Cognizant of all things* serves as a justifying explanation (*al-taʿlīl*) for the clause *...then He will inform them of what they did on the day of resurrection...* and an affirmation of what has preceded regarding His knowledge of whatever is in the heavens and on the earth and Him being present with the secret conferrers. Finally, the verse is befitting as a preliminary to the content of the following verses; paving the way for them, while its end part consists of a severely threatening tone related to what occurs in the succeeding verses of censure and warning.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نُهُوا عَنِ النَّجْوَىٰ ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَيَتَنَاجَوْنَ بِالْإِثْمِ
وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُولِ وَإِذَا جَاءُوكَ حَيَّوْكَ بِمَا لَمْ يُحَيِّكَ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَيَقُولُونَ فِي
أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَوْلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا اللَّهُ بِمَا نَقُولُ ۚ حَسْبُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ يَصْلَوْنَهَا ۖ فَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٨﴾

(58:8) Have you not seen those who are forbidden secret counsels,

> then they return to what they are forbidden, and they hold secret counsels for sin, enmity and hostility, and disobedience to the Messenger, and when they come to you they greet you with a greeting with which Allah does not greet you, and (or while) they say within themselves (or within their hearts): Why does not Allah punish us for what we say? Hell is enough for them; they shall burn in it, and evil is the resort.

The content of these verses indicates that there was a group of hypocrites, along with those who had sickness in their hearts from the believers, who had established and spread a secret counsel among themselves against the Prophet and the believers. They engaged in secret conversations among themselves in favor of sin, enmity and hostility, and disobedience to the Messenger of God, and in order to harm and torment the believers and to grieve and sadden them. They used to persist in that, refusing to stop when asked to, and consequently, these verses were revealed.

Thus the statement *Have you not seen those who are forbidden secret counsels, then they return to what they are forbidden...* consists of blame, rebuke, and censure against them in absentia where the verse addresses the Prophet rather than addressing them directly, refusing to address them directly in order to exaggerate the contemptible and debased nature of their deed, and to distance them from the honor of a direct address.

And hence the meaning obtained is: 'do you not see those who were forbidden from engaging in secret conversations and counsels among themselves regarding what saddens and grieves the believers? And yet they return to engaging in what they were prohibited from, returning to it again and again!' The masculine third person plural present tense verb *yaʿūdūna* in this verse (meaning: they return) indicates sustained continuity (of this misdeed on their part),[1] while the verse's abstention from using a pronoun to refer to the act of secret counsel and using a relative pronoun and relative clause to refer to it instead, where the verse says *yaʿūdūna limā nuhū ʿanhu*—they return to *what they were forbidden from*[2]—rather than simply stating *yaʿūdūna ilayhā*—they return to it (*hā* (it) being the relevant (feminine) pronoun in reference to

1 Translator's note: This is because the present tense stresses unfinished action or an ongoing activity, and therefore its continuity.

2 Translator's note: (*mā* (in *limā*) translated as 'what' being the relative pronoun, *nuhū ʿanhu* translated as 'they were forbidden from', being the relative clause–(altogether becoming—(*yaʿūdūna*) they return (*limā*) to what (*nuhū ʿanhu*) they were forbidden from).

al-najwā)—indicates the cause of blame and censure and the evilness of their return to the despicable deed, for it was a deed prohibited.

The statement *...and they hold secret counsels for sin, enmity and hostility, and disobedience to the Messenger...* contains a comparison between the three (mis)deeds, *al-ithm* (sin), *al-ʿudwān* (enmity and hostility) and *maʿṣiyat al-rasūl* (disobedience to the Messenger) which signifies that the word *al-ithm* (sin) refers to a deed which has an evil effect but whose evil effect does not extend to beyond the perpetrator of the deed such as drinking intoxicants, gambling, and the abandoning of the ritual prayers, which are from the deeds that relate to God's rights on man. As for the word *al-ʿudwān* (enmity and hostility), this refers to a deed whose effect extends beyond the perpetrator and on to others; deeds by which mankind is negatively affected and harmed; these are disobedient deeds that relate to the rights of man on man. Both these types of misdeeds (*al-ithm* (sin) and *al-ʿudwān* (enmity and hostility)) fall within the purview of God's disobedience. As for the phrase *maʿṣiyat al-rasūl* (disobedience to the Messenger) it refers to disobeying and opposing the Messenger in matters which are permissible in and of themselves, having no instruction in favor or against them from God, however the Messenger instructs in favor of it or against it for the welfare and benefit of the Muslim community. This is in light of his leadership and guardianship responsibilities over their affairs, and the Messenger has greater right over the believers than they have over themselves. An example of such *maʿṣiyat al-rasūl* (disobedience to the Messenger) is his prohibition to them from secret conversations and counsels even if that did not involve sin and disobedience.

The previous clause, *Have you not seen those who are forbidden secret counsels, then they return to what they are forbidden...* consists of blame and censure for the self-same secret counsels in light of it being prohibited, regardless of it being disobedience or otherwise. Then, this clause*...and they hold secret counsels for sin, enmity and hostility, and disobedience to the Messenger...* consists of blame and censure for them in light of their secret counsels and whispered conversations consisting of disobedience in its various types. These people were the hypocrites and the sick of heart. They used to engage in a lot of secret conversations between themselves in order to cause anxiety and sadness to the believers so that the latter may be aggrieved and hurt.

It is suggested that the hypocrites and the Jews used to confer privately with each other in order to hurt and cause anxiety to the believers and in order to spread fear and alarm among them, and to weaken their resolve; however the inclusion of the Jews in this verse is not explicit.

...and when they come to you (jāʾūka) *they greet you* (ḥayyawka) *with a*

greeting with which Allah does not greet you: This part refers to their (the hypocrites' and the diseased heart's) misbehavior with the Prophet. God greeted him with the greetings of peace and had laid it down as a greeting for him from Himself; a pure, blessed greeting, however they (the hypocrites and the diseased heart) used to greet him with other than the laid down formula. They (the exegetes) say that this refers to the Jews. When they would come to the Prophet they would say *al-sāmu ʿalayka* where the word *al-sāmu* means death, and they would delude others into thinking that they were actually saying *al-salāmu ʿalayka.* This is not improbable, however the masculine third person plural pronoun 'they', which occurs (twice) in this part of the verse, refers to the relative noun *alladhī*—those who—which occurs at the beginning of this very verse *...those who are forbidden secret counsels...* (and so the same group of people is referred to throughout this verse) and you know now that the inclusion of the Jews in it is not explicit (and hence it is better to limit the consideration of those rebuked in this verse to the hypocrites and the sick of heart).

The statement *...and they say within themselves* (*or within their hearts*)*: Why does not Allah punish us for what we say* occurs either as a statement conjoined (*al-ʿaṭf*) to the clause *...and when they come to you they greet you....* or it occurs in relation to it in the grammatical sense of *al-ḥāl.*

The apparent meaning of this statement is that what they say is from their selves; from the speech of their souls (and hearts) (*wa yaqūlūna fī anfusihim*), which they conceal in their hearts and it incites them to rebellion and sarcasm. Thus, ensuing from the hypocrites, such speech results in denial of the Messengership of the Prophet in a figurative sense, and the meaning thus obtained is: 'they greet you with what God has not greeted you and they ask their hearts for the proof of their speech, which is—why does God not punish us for it?—in that it means you are not a messenger from God for had you been His messenger, He would have punished them for their utterance.'

It is also suggested that the meaning of the phrase *...and they say within themselves* (*or within their hearts*)*...* (wa yaqūlūna fī anfusihim) means what they say among themselves in conversation with each other, however that is far from valid.

God then refutes their aspersion which was *...Why does not Allah punish us for what we say?* He does this by *Hell is enough for them; they shall burn in it, and evil is the resort,* meaning: 'they are surely mistaken in assuming that they will not be punished, for they shall surely be punished with what God has prepared for them of punishment, which is hell, which they would enter and whose heat they shall experience, which would be sufficient for them as punishment.'

And when the hypocrites and those who followed them did not cease their

nefarious deeds despite the prohibitions and severe reprimands, the following verses descended *If the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease and the agitators in the city do not desist, We shall most certainly set you over them, then they shall not be your neighbors in it but for a little while* (33:60); *Cursed: wherever they are found they shall be seized and killed, a* (*horrible*) *killing* (33:61).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَنَاجَيْتُمْ فَلَا تَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُولِ وَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ۝٩

(58:9) O you who believe! When you hold secret counsel, do it not for sin, enmity and hostility, and disobedience to the Messenger, rather do it for righteousness and guarding (against evil); and be careful or conscious of (your duty to) Allah, to Whom you shall be gathered together.

The content of these verses indicates that this verse was revealed in order to remove the risk and peril (in holding secret counsels). In this verse, the believers were addressed and permission was granted to them to engage in secret counsels with the condition that it should not be one in favor of sin, enmity, hostility, and disobedience to the Messenger, rather it should be one in favor of righteousness (*birr*) and God-consciousness (*taqwā*). The former, which means extensiveness in good deeds, contrasts with enmity and hostility (*al-ʿudwān*), while the latter contrasts with sin (*al-ithm*). Thereafter, the verse terminates with an emphasis on absolute God-consciousness by warning the believers of the day of the gathering of souls where it says *...and be careful or conscious of* (*your duty to*) *Allah, to Whom you shall be gathered together.*

إِنَّمَا النَّجْوَىٰ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ لِيَحْزُنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَيْسَ بِضَارِّهِمْ شَيْئًا إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۝١٠

(58:10) Secret counsels are only (the work) of the Satan that he may cause to grieve those who believe, and he (the Satan) cannot harm them in the least except with Allah's permission, and on Allah let the believers rely.

The 'secret counsels' (*al-najwā*) mentioned in this verse, on the basis of the literary context, indicates that it is a reference to the secret counsels prevalent during those days between the hypocrites and the sick of heart, which was from the handiwork of the Satan. This is because it was Satan who made secret counsels alluring and attractive to the hearts of the hypocrites so that he could use these secret counsels as a means to cause grief to the believers, to confuse their hearts by rendering them anxious, and to deceive them into believing that

the secret counsels were in regards to a calamity that was to befall them and a misfortune that was to afflict them.

Then, God soothed and pacified the hearts of the believers by reminding them that all matters lay in God's control and that the Satan or the secret counsels would not harm them at all save by God's permission. Therefore, they needed to place their trust in Him and not fear Satan's harm. Indeed, God has explicitly stated in the verse ... *and whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him* (65:3) in that He surely suffices whoever trusts Him. Furthermore, God motivates and encourages them to trust Him for that is from the requisites of the faith of the believers, and so if they were believers then let them place their trust in Him, and He would suffice them. This is the meaning of the part of this verse that says ...*and he* (*the Satan*) *cannot harm them in the least except with Allah's permission, and on Allah let the believers rely.*

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۖ وَإِذَا قِيلَ انْشُزُوا فَانْشُزُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١١﴾

(58:11) O you who believe! When it is said to you, make (ample) room in (your) assemblies, then make ample room, Allah will provide ample room for you, and when it is said: Rise up, then rise up. Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, in high degrees; and Allah is Aware of what you do.

The word *al-tafassuḥ* means 'extensiveness, spaciousness, wideness, and ampleness.' The word *al-fasḥ* has the same meaning. The word *al-majālis* (assemblies/sitting places/gatherings) is the plural of *al-majlis* which is a noun of place (*ism al-makān*).[1] The imperative in favor of making ample room in an assembly or place of sitting (*al-tafassuḥ fī al-majlis*) that occurs in this verse means an attendee making ample room in an assembly so that the place becomes wide, spacious, and ample for another, while the mention of God making ample room for such an attendee means God making ample room for him/her in paradise.

This verse contains a specific etiquette from the etiquettes of social intercourse while the verse's content and context suggests that the Muslims at the time of the Prophet used to attend his assembly and sit close together, in a

1 Translator's note: The noun of place (*ism al-makān*), which in this case is *al-majlis*, expresses the place where the action of the verb *jalasa* (he sat/to sit) is committed.

collected heap so to speak, piling up close to each other such that there would be no room to sit for others who came to attend the same assembly. Consequently, they were disciplined by the words *...When it is said to you, make* (*ample*) *room in* (*your*) *assemblies, then make ample room...* However, the directive in this verse is general in import even though the initial purport of its descent was the Prophet's assembly.

Hence the meaning obtained is: 'O believers, when you are told to make ample room for others in the assemblies or sitting places so that the sitting space becomes extensive for others as well as for yourselves, then comply, and God shall make extensive room for you in paradise.'

The statement *...and when it is said: Rise up, then rise up...* contains yet another etiquette of social intercourse. The word *al-nushūz*—as it is said—means 'rising up, going away from something by moving away from it.' Here, 'rising up from a gathering' means 'a person getting up from his place so that another may sit there; to give up one's place.' The former does this for the latter in order to honor and respect him/her and in deference to the latter's merit and excellence. Hence the meaning obtained is: 'when you are told to rise and give up your place in an assembly so that one who is better than you in knowledge and piety may sit there then do so.'

The verse mentioning that *Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, in high degrees* unmistakably suggests that when God elevates the status of a servant, it signifies bringing them closer to Himself. Logically, the phrase *and those who are given knowledge* refers to the learned individuals among the believers. Therefore, this verse delineates believers into two distinct groups: a general believer and a learned believer. The learned believer holds a higher status. This is in line with God's declaration in the Qur'an: *Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike?* (39:9).

From this verse, it is evident that the phrase 'exalting in high *degrees*' (degrees in plural) specifically refers to those endowed with knowledge, whereas other believers are exalted by *a degree* (degree in the singular). The verse implies: 'God shall exalt those who believe from among you, *a high degree*, while He will exalt those who are given knowledge from among you, *in high degrees*.' This distinction underlines the exalted status and increased honor bestowed upon scholars, acknowledging their elevated position and significance. Thereafter, God affirms and emphasizes His directives in this verse by closing the verse with the words *...and Allah is Aware of what you do.*

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نَاجَيْتُمُ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدِّمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ نَجْوَاكُمْ صَدَقَةً ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ ۚ فَإِن لَّمْ تَجِدُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

> (58:12) O you who believe! When you consult the Messenger in private, spend something in charity before your private consultation. That will be best for you (all), and most conducive to purity (of conduct). But if you find not (the wherewithal), then Allah is surely Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

This verse means: 'if you intend to hold a private consultation with the Messenger of God then give something in charity before it.' The part of this verse that says *That will be best for you, and most conducive to purity* (*of conduct*) is in order to explain the purpose and justification (*al-ta'līl*) for the legislation of this ordinance, akin to the verse *...and that you fast* (*which*) *is best for you*... (2:184). Undoubtedly, the meaning of charity being best and most conducive to purity is that the verse aims to say that it is best for your selves and most conducive to purity for your hearts. Perhaps the reason for this ordinance was that the rich from among the Muslims at that time used to often engage in private consultations with the Prophet, (monopolizing his time and) attempting to manifest by that a kind of closeness and affinity to him and a kind of special relationship with him while the poor among them used to be aggrieved and saddened by such behavior and their hearts would break.

Hence, the wealthy were ordered to give in charity to the poor before their private consultations with the Prophet since the act of giving has a positive effect among humans such as it creates a bond between souls, arouses mercy, compassion, and love between them, and creates close ties between hearts by the removal of anger and rancor.

The masculine *singular* demonstrative pronoun—*dhālika*—(translated as 'that' in *That will be best...*) which occurs here (in the middle of this verse's narrative) is a brief and sudden shift in address (*al-iltifāṭ*) to the Prophet between the two addresses made to the believers (that is, the addresses before and after this pronoun). This has the effect of conveying a delicate and gentle mode of exalting and honoring the Prophet since the ordinance of charity was related to private consultations with him and therefore the sudden, brief shift in address to him was a way of demonstrating additional care and attention on him.

But if you find not (the wherewithal), then Allah is surely Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful: Meaning, that if you do not find anything which you may give in charity then it is not obligatory on you to do so for God has turned to you in lenience and has permitted you to confer privately with the Prophet (without giving charity). He has pardoned you for ... *Allah is surely Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.* This end part of the verse which says ... *Allah is surely Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful* is an example of stating the cause (God being forgiving and merciful) in place of the effect (which is *maghfira*—forgiveness, and

raḥma—mercy), and in addition, this part of the verse contains the evidence that the obligation of charity was removed from the poor just as this part of the verse serves as contextual evidence that the intent of the earlier part of this verse which contains the imperative *...spend something in charity before your private consultation...* was an obligation; an obligation for the rich.

أَأَشْفَقْتُمْ أَنْ تُقَدِّمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ نَجْوَاكُمْ صَدَقَاتٍ ۚ فَإِذْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَتَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

(58:13) Do you fear giving charity before your consultation? So when you did not do it, Allah has turned to you (with forgiveness), then keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and obey Allah and His Messenger; and Allah is well-Aware of what you do.

This verse abrogates the ordinance in favor of charity mentioned in the previous verse. This verse contains a severe reproof for the companions of the Prophet and the believers since they forsook private consultations with the Prophet for fear of the need to spend wealth in the form of charity before it. Consequently, none consulted the Prophet in private save ʻAlī who held ten private consultations with him. Every time he sought to have a private meeting with the Prophet, he offered charity before it. Thereafter, this verse descended and cancelled the ordinance.

The word *al-ishfāq* means 'fear, anxiety, apprehension', while the rest of the question occurs as the grammatical object of the masculine second person plural past tense verb *ashfaqtum.* Hence the meaning obtained is: 'do you all fear giving in charity and spending your wealth for the sake of private consultations with the Prophet?' It is also possible that the grammatical object of the verb *ashfaqa* is elided and the implied meaning is: 'do you all fear *poverty* (*a-ashfaqtum al-faqr an...*) due to the need to spend of your wealth?' Some scholars have opined that the occurrence of the word *al-ṣadaqāt* (charities), which is the plural form of the word *al-ṣadaqa* (charity), suggests that the fear was not in fact due to the offering of charity once for that is not the cause of poverty but rather the continuous nature of the ordinance and consequently that of giving charity continuously; that is, every time a private consultation was sought from the Prophet.

The statement *...So when you did not do it, Allah has turned to you* (*with forgiveness*)*, then keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and obey Allah and His Messenger; and Allah is well-Aware of what you do* means: 'so when you did not do what you were charged with, God has retracted His ordinance and turned to you with pardon and forgiveness, hence, resolve to comply with the totality of the divine instructions laid on you such as keeping up the ritual prayer and

paying the poor-rate.' The clause *...Allah has turned to you* (*with forgiveness*)... is proof that their disinclination to give charity prior to engaging in private consultations with the Prophet was a sin and an act of disobedience on their part although God forgave them for that.

This is while the phrase *then keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and obey Allah and His Messenger; and Allah is well-Aware of what you do* is presented as a natural follow-up to *So when you did not do it, Allah has turned to you (with forgiveness)*, indicating the abrogation of the rule requiring charity before private consultations with the Prophet. The directive *and obey Allah and His Messenger* serves as a broad mandate for adhering to all divine commands, emphasizing unwavering obedience. The concluding part, *and Allah is well-Aware of what you do*, adds an element of severity, reinforcing the importance of obeying God and the Prophet (with the understanding that God is fully aware of all actions).

Examining Narrations

(1) Ḥamza and Ruways, transmitting from Yaʿqūb, recited the verb *yatanājawna*[1] (in Q58:8) as *yantajawna*[2] while the rest recited it as *yatanājawna*. The following statement of the Prophet, in favor of ʿAlī, attests to Ḥamza's recital. The Prophet said the following when some of his companions asked him: (*atunājīhi dūnanā*)—'do you secretly converse with him (ʿAlī) excluding us?' He replied: (*mā ana antajaytuhu*)—'I do not secretly converse with him, (*bal allāhu intajāhu*)—rather God secretly converses with him!'[3]

(2) ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar: 'the Jews used to greet the Messenger of God with "*sāmu ʿalayka*," intending to insult and curse him by that. Then they would say within themselves (or within their hearts) *...Why does not Allah punish us for what we say?* (58:8). *Whereupon* this verse was revealed *...and when they come to you they greet you with a greeting with which Allah does not greet you, and/while they say within themselves* (*or within their hearts*)*: Why does not Allah punish us for what we say? Hell is enough for them; they shall burn in it, and evil is the resort* (58:8).'[4]

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1 Translator's note: This verb is in the sixth form of Arabic verbal forms. It means 'to whisper to each other; to carry on a whispered conversation; to converse intimately; to exchange secrets.'

2 Translator's note: This verb is in the eighth form of Arabic verbal forms. It means 'to whisper something into each other's ear.'

3 *Majmaʿ al-bayān*.

4 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Aḥmad, ʿAbd ibn Ḥamīd, al-Bazzār, Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Ṭabarāni, and Ibn Mardawayhi while al-Bayhaqī transmits it

(3) Ibn ʿAbbās regarding Q58:8: 'the hypocrites used to greet the Messenger of God with "*sāmu ʿalayka*" whereupon this verse was revealed.'[1]

Author's comment: This report is more credible than the previous one on the basis of what has been presented in the commentary of the (relevant) verse. ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī has transmitted a report in his Qur'an commentary which says that they (the hypocrites) used to greet him (the Prophet) by the words *anʿama ṣabāḥan*—good morning, and *anʿama masāʾan*—good evening, which were pre-Islamic *jāhili* greetings.

(4) Jābir ibn ʿAbdillāh has transmitted the following Prophetic report in regards to ...*Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, in high degrees...* (58:11) that the Prophet said: 'the merit of the scholar over the martyr is that of a degree while the merit of the martyr over the worshipper is a degree. The merit of the Prophet over the scholar is a degree while the merit of the Qur'an over all speech is as the merit of God over the entirety of His creation. This is while the merit of the scholar over all mankind is as my merit over (*adnāhum*)—the lowest of them (the mankind)'.[2]

Author's comment: The end part of the report is suspect. This is because the apparent identification of the masculine plural suffix pronoun *hum* (them) in the phrase *adnāhum*—lowest of *them*—to 'mankind' suggests that there are grades and degrees to mankind where some from among them are superior, and others average in degree or rank. This would therefore mean that if the merit of the scholar over all mankind (which contains people of varying degrees: superior, moderate and inferior in rank or degree) is as the merit of the Prophet over the lowest of them then that would mean that the scholar is superior to the Prophet, which is not possible! This is unless the meaning of the superlative word *adnā* is understood to mean 'the closest of' (rather than 'the lowest of') in which case the meaning of the phrase *adnāhum* would be 'closest of them (mankind)' and consequently the latter part of the report above would say: 'This is while the merit of the scholar over all mankind is as my merit over (*adnāhum*)—the closest of them (the mankind) to me' meaning, closest of the people or mankind to the Prophet, which is the scholar just as this is suggested in this very same report where it says 'the merit of the Prophet over the scholar is a degree'. Thus the meaning that comes across is that the Prophet intended to

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in *Shuʿb al-Īmān* via a good chain of transmission, from him.

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Mardawayhi from him.

2 *Majmaʿ al-bayān*.

say that the merit of the scholar over all mankind is as my merit over the closest of mankind to me, which is the scholar.

(5) ʿAlī said: ʿThere is certainly a verse in the book of God which none acted on before me and none shall act on it after me too. This is the verse of *al-najwā*—private consultation (with the Prophet)—*O you who believe! When you consult the Messenger in private, spend something in charity before your private consultation. That will be best for you* (*all*), *and most conducive to purity* (*of conduct*) (58:12). I had a *dīnār* which I exchanged for ten *dirhams*. Thus, whenever I sought a private audience with the Prophet and held a private consultation with him, I would spend a *dirham* in charity before it. Then the verse was rescinded and none acted on it. The following verse was revealed *Do you fear giving charity before your consultation? So when you did not do it, Allah has turned to you* (*with forgiveness*)... (58:13).[1]

(6) Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir replied as follows to Abū Baṣīr when the latter asked him about *O you who believe! When you consult the Messenger in private, spend something in charity before your private consultation. That will be best for you* (*all*), *and most conducive to purity* (*of conduct*) (58:12). He said: "Alī in Abī Ṭālib spent in charity before seeking a private audience with the Prophet. Thereafter, He (God) rescinded it (the ordinance) by *Do you fear giving charity before your consultation? So when you did not do it, Allah has turned to you* (*with forgiveness*).... (58:13)[2]

Author's comment: There are many reports with this meaning, transmitted via Shiʿa and Sunni chains of transmission.

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Saʿd ibn Manṣūr, Ibn Rāhawayhi, Ibn Abī Shayba, ʿAbd ibn Ḥamīd, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Mardawayhi and al-Ḥākim who authenticated it, from him.

2 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, by means of his chain of transmission terminating at Abū Baṣīr from him.

Verses 14-22

The verses in this section mention a group of the hypocrites who had befriended the Jews while they (the Jews) opposed God and His Messenger. Thus these verses reproach the hypocrites for that deed and severely threaten them with punishment and wretchedness. These verses then authoritatively assert at the end that faith in God and the last day prevents a person from befriending whoever opposes God and His Messenger; whosoever that maybe. It also praises the believers who disavow the enemies of God and promises them constant faith, a spirit from God, paradise, and (God's) satisfaction.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا هُمْ مِنْكُمْ وَلَا مِنْهُمْ وَيَحْلِفُونَ عَلَى الْكَذِبِ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

(58:14) Have you not seen those who befriend and take as allies a people with whom Allah is angry? They are neither of you nor of them, and they swear falsely while they know.

The phrase in this verse which mentions 'a people with whom God is angry' (*qawman ghaḍiba allāhu 'alayhim*) is a reference to the Jews. God says ... (*Worse is he*) *whom Allah has cursed and is angry with, and of whom He made apes and swine, and he who served Satan*... (5:60). This is while the pronoun *hum* (they) (in *They are neither of you*) refers to the hypocrites, while the pronoun *hum* (them) (in ...*nor of them*) refers to the Jews. Thus the meaning of this verse is that: "These hypocrites (who have befriended and taken as allies a people with whom God is angry, and these are the Jews), due to their wavering nature between belief and disbelief (a core characteristic of hypocrisy), are not from you (that is, from the believers) and nor are they from the Jews. God says (describing the hypocrites): *Wavering between that* (*and this*), (*belonging*) *neither to these nor to those; and whomsoever Allah causes to err, you shall not find a way for him* (4:143)."

But this is the characteristic of the hypocrites on the basis of their apparent state, however on the basis of reality they are joined to those whom they have befriended and taken as allies. God says *O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people* (5:51). Thus there is no contradiction between the verse ...*They are neither of you nor of them*... and ...*then surely he is one of them*... (5:51).[1]

1 Translator's note: Since 58:14 refers to their apparent state while 5:51 refers to their real state.

Some have held that the masculine third person plural personal pronoun *hum* (they) (in *mā hum minkum—They are neither of you*) refers to 'the people with whom God is angry' (*qawman ghaḍiba allāhu 'alayhim*) and these are the Jews while the masculine third person plural pronominal suffix *hum* (them) (adjoined to the preposition *min* in *wa lā minhum—nor of them*) refers to the relative noun *alladhīna* (those who [befriend and take as allies]), and these are the hypocrites. Thus in such a case, the meaning obtained would be: 'have you not seen the hypocrites who have befriended the Jews and taken them as allies? The Jews are not from you for you are believers and nor are they from the hypocrites themselves, rather they are different from both the parties and not of them.' In this description there is a kind of blame but it (the interpretation) is far from valid.

This verse then ends with the statement *...and they swear falsely while they know* meaning the hypocrites swear falsely to you that they are from you, (meaning that they are) believers like you while they know that they are lying in their oath.

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۖ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

(58:15) Allah has prepared for them a severe punishment; surely what they have been doing is evil.

The word *al-i'idād* that occurs in this verse means 'preparation' while the part of this verse that says *...surely what they have been doing is evil* occurs as a justificatory explanation (*al-ta'līl*) for what God has prepared for them of punishment. This is while the part of this verse that says *...what they have been doing...* (*mā kānū ya'malūn*) is evidence that they were continuous in their deed, being incessant in it. Consequently, the meaning obtained for this verse is that: 'God has prepared a severe punishment for them due to their incessant, continuous engagement with their evil deed.'

اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ﴿١٦﴾

(58:16) They make their oaths to serve as a cover and they turn (people) away from Allah's path; therefore they shall have an abasing chastisement.

The word *aymān* in this verse is the plural of *yamīn* which means 'oath', while the word *junna* means 'a cover by which harm and injury are avoided such as a shield.' The word *muhīn* (which occurs as an adjective for the noun *'adhāb,* qualifying it) is in the form of an active participle and derived from the verbal noun *al-ihāna*, meaning 'humiliation, debasement, and dishonor.' Hence, the meaning obtained for this verse is: 'the hypocrites take their oaths as

a cover, intending to rebut by it any accusation and suspicion from themselves whenever something surfaces from their part which startles the believers and fills them with doubt, suspicion, and misgiving. Thus they keep themselves away from the path of God, which is Islam, as well as turn the believers away from it too! For that, theirs will be a humiliating and disgraceful punishment.'

لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

(58:17) Neither will their wealth nor will their children prove of help to them against Allah; those are the inmates of the fire, wherein they shall abide.

The meaning of this verse is: "The thing which calls them to their misdeeds is the enjoyment of the life of this world, which is wealth and children. However they will need to save themselves from God's everlasting punishment, which none other than God can accomplish for them. Thus they are in need of Him while neither their wealth nor their children can avail them against Him, therefore (the message is): let them all believe in Him and worship Him."

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيَحْلِفُونَ لَهُ كَمَا يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ ۖ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ ۚ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

(58:18) On the Day when Allah shall raise them all up, they shall swear to Him just as they swear to you. They think they have something (to stand on), but hearken! They are surely liars.

This verse refers to a specific point in time (*ẓarf al-zamān*) concerning what has been previously stated in *Allah has prepared for them a severe punishment...* (58:15) or in *...those are the inmates of the fire...* (58:17). The phrase *they shall swear to Him just as they swear to you* means that the hypocrites will swear to God on the Day of Resurrection in the same manner they swear to you in the worldly life.

We have already explained in the commentary of the verse, *Then their excuse would be nothing but that they would say: By Allah, our Lord, we were not polytheists* (6:23)[1] that their false swearing on the day of resurrection, despite the manifestation of the realities of things on that day, would be from the manifestation of their character traits there due to the traits being deeply embedded in their souls while in the world. Thus they had become accustomed to them; that is, to the manifestation of falsehood over truth by means of false oaths.

1 See Eng. vol. 13. (Ed.)

Consequently, just as they live, so shall they die, and just as they die, so shall they be resurrected.

Similar in nature would be such occurrences as their request to be returned to the world on that day, their request to be allowed to exit the fire, their disputes and arguments in the fire, and other such things which the noble Qur'an narrates despite them witnessing with their very own eyes that there was no way such demands would be met on that day; for that day would be that of requital and not that of action.

The statement, ...*They think they have something* (*to stand on*)... means (they think) they are firmly established and consolidated on something regarding which it is appropriate to be firm and consolidated on, and thus it is possible for them to hide the truth and to prevent their falsehood from manifesting by means of negation and false oaths. It is possible that this statement may be qualifying the part of this verse that says ...*just as they swear to you*... in which case it may be indicating their description *in this world* which is that they reckon that their (false) oaths to you all (in this world) benefits them and satisfies (and fools) you all, in which case the part of this verse that says ...*but hearken! They are surely liars* is a judgement from God regarding them in that they are lying, and consequently He shall not pay any attention to whatever nonsense they utter and nor would He care for what they will be swearing by.

Alternatively, it is possible it may be qualifying the part of this verse that says *On the Day when Allah shall raise them all up, they shall swear to Him*... in which case it would be from the perspective of the manifestation of their character traits on *that day* (*the day of resurrection*) just as was described in the context of their swearing here-to-before. In this case then, the statement ...*but hearken! They are surely liars*... serves as a judgement from God regarding their lying on the day of resurrection or regarding their lying in an absolute sense.

اسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ ذِكْرَ اللَّهِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ حِزْبُ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ الشَّيْطَانِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

(58:19) Satan has overcome and overwhelmed them and has therefore made them forget Allah's remembrance. Those are the party of the Satan. Hearken! The party of the Satan are surely the losers.

The word *al-istiḥwādh* which occurs in this verse means 'to take possession of something, to take over, to seize and appropriate something, and to overcome and overwhelm something thereby gaining dominance and triumph over it.' The rest of the verse is clear.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادُّونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي الْأَذَلِّينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

(58:20) Truly those who oppose Allah and His Messenger will be among the abased and humiliated ones.

This verse explains and justifies (*al-taʿlīl*) the state of the opponents of God and His Messenger as being the losers. It explains that they will be losers because they oppose God and His Messenger by means of opposition and resistance while the opponents of God and His Messenger are from the totality of the humiliated and abased ones of God's creation.

It is (also) suggested that the opponents of God will be from the abased and humiliated ones because humiliation of one of the parties to a quarrel or dispute depends upon the measure of glory, honor, power, and might of the other, and when glory, honor, might, and power belong to God in their totality there then does not remain for the one who opposes God save pure and unadulterated abasement and humiliation!

كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٢١﴾

(58:21) Allah has decreed, 'I shall surely prevail, I and My messengers!' Truly Allah is Strong, Mighty.

The word *al-kitāba* (which occurs in this verse in relation to God) means 'the decree and judgment of God.' The apparent meaning of the word *al-ghalaba* (to prevail, to triumph) in this verse means 'to prevail and triumph from the perspective of proof and evidence (al-ḥujja), from the perspective of hidden (divine) support and favor (al-taʿyīd al-ghaybiyy), and from the perspective of the nature and quality of faith (ṭabīʿatu al-īmān) in God and His Messenger.'

As for the meaning of prevailing and triumph (*al-ghalaba*) from the perspective of proof and evidence (*al-ḥujja*), this means that the human being has been created in such a manner that he is able to recognize and appreciate the truth and to submit to it. Hence, if the truth is made clear and evident to him, from the path which he is accustomed to, then he does not tarry long before he apprehends it. When he apprehends it, his nature acknowledges and admits to it, and his conscience surrenders and submits to it even if he does not surrender to it in fact and indeed, which may be due to him following his whims and desires or due to whatever obstacle prevents him from such an acknowledgement and surrender.

As for the meaning of prevailing and triumph (*al-ghalaba*) from the perspective of hidden (divine) support and favor (*al-taʿyīd al-ghaybiyy*), and from the perspective of the judgment in favor of truth over falsehood then what suffices in this regard are the various kinds of divine punishments which God sent onto the deniers and beliers from the past nations such as the people of Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lot, Shuʿayb, Pharaoh's cohorts and others, indicated by God in

the verse *Then We sent Our messengers in succession. Whenever there came unto a community its messenger, they would deny him. So We caused them to follow one another, and made them the objects of stories. So away with a people who believe not!* (23:44). The divine *modus-operandi* was established on this norm and God's speech summarizes this as follows *For every community there is a messenger, and when their messenger comes, judgment shall be rendered between them with justice, and they will not be wronged* (10:47).

As for the meaning of prevailing and triumph from the perspective of the nature and quality of faith (*ṭabīʿatu al-īmān*) in God and His Messenger then the faith of the believer calls him to defend, support, and protect the truth and to resist against falsehood in an absolute manner. Such a person is of the opinion that if he kills he is successful and if he is killed he is successful too. Consequently, his resolve and determination to defend the truth are unconditional and unlimited; they are steadfast and unflinching. This is in contrast to the one who defends something, not because it is the truth but rather because of one or the other worldly aims and purposes. Therefore, he defends for the sake of his self. Consequently, if he sees himself on the brink of destruction and harm or sees himself advancing towards risk, he turns away defeated and vanquished because he is defending conditionally and only up to a limit, which is the safety of his self and the absence of exposing his self to destruction. Necessarily, an absolute, unconditional, and unlimited determination and resolve will prevail and triumph over a conditional and limited determination and resolve which is subject to limitation.

An example of that is the battles of the Messenger of God, which brought him victory and triumph when in fact the battles were a competition and a rivalry (between him and his adversaries, where these battles had their fair share of ups and downs for the Muslims), however in the end this rivalry only ended with the success of the Muslims and their triumph over their opponents. The Islamic conquests did not come to a halt and nor did the unity of the Muslims scatter and fragment hither and thither but for the corruption of their intentions, the replacement of a God-conscious lifestyle and sincerity for God for their contraries, and giving preference to the extension of power and the expansion of kingdom to that of true faith *That is because Allah never changes a blessing by which He blesses a people until they change what is in themselves, and because Allah is Hearing, Knowing* (8:53). God had laid a condition on the Muslims when He perfected their religion and made them secure from their enemies, which was that they should fear Him: *This day those who disbelieve have despaired of your religion. So fear them not, but fear Me*! (5:3). And the following verse suffices to reiterate this triumph and victory in what God

addresses the believers: *Do not falter and do not grieve for you will be ascendant if you are believers* (3:139).

لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَأَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوحٍ مِنْهُ ۖ وَيُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ حِزْبُ اللَّهِ ۚ أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

(58:22) You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the last day loving/befriending whoever opposes Allah and His Messenger even if they were their fathers or sons or brothers or tribesmen/kinsmen. Those are the ones in whose hearts He has inscribed faith and has strengthened them with a spirit from Himself. He shall make them enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they shall abide forever, Allah being satisfied with them and they being satisfied with Him. Those are the (members of the) party of Allah. Hearken! The (members of the) party of Allah are undoubtedly prosperous.

The negation in this verse of finding a people such as those described therein means that true and sincere faith in God and the last day do not come together with love and friendship for those who stubbornly oppose (God and His Messenger) and are inimical (to them) from among the disbelievers. This is even if such causes of love and affection such as the bond of parenthood, the bond of offspring, the bond of brotherhood, or any of the different kinds of relationships and bonds were to be associated with them. This is because faith (in God and in His Messenger) and love for the opponents and enemies (of God and His Messengers) are antithetical to each other and do not come together (in one heart).

It is patently clear that the part of this verse that says ...*even if they were their fathers or sons or brothers or tribesmen/kinsmen*.... is an indication of the causes or reasons of love and friendship in an absolute sense while the verse specifies the love of kinship, by mentioning it (specifically), because it is the strongest cause or reason of love from the perspective of firmness and constancy.

The part of this verse which says ...*Those are the ones in whose hearts He has inscribed faith*... refers to the people who believe in God and the last day and who refuse to befriend/love God and His Prophet's opponents irrespective of close kinship ties, while the noun *al-kitāba* (a reference to the part of this verse which says *ulā'ika kataba fī qulūbihim al-īmān—Those are the ones in whose hearts He has inscribed* (kataba) *faith* ...) denotes 'establishment, sustainment, and confirmation (of the faith) such that it does not change, alter or disappear.'

This is while the subject of (or the subject pronoun inherent to) the (masculine third person singular past tense) verb *kataba* (which is 'He' in *...He has inscribed* (kataba) *faith*) is God. Thus this is an explicit attestation that the people described are true believers.

The word *al-ta'yīd* that occurs in the part of this verse which says *...and has strengthened them with a spirit from Himself...* means 'to strengthen and fortify' while the subject of (or the pronoun inherent to) the masculine third person singular past tense verb *ayyada* in *ayyadahum* refers to God, and the same is true for the pronominal suffix *hu* appended to the preposition *min* in *minhu.* The preposition *min* is identified here as *min al-ibtidā'iyya.*[1] Hence, the meaning is: 'God has strengthened them with a spirit from Himself.' It is also suggested that the pronominal suffix *hu* appended to the preposition *min* refers to faith in which case the meaning of this part of the verse is that: 'God has strengthened them with a spirit *from the category of faith*.' He enlivens their hearts by it, and such an interpretation is fine too.

It is also suggested that the 'spirit' in this verse refers to Gabriel just as it is suggested to refer to the Qur'an. It is also suggested to mean 'proof' and 'evidence'. However all these meanings are weak and have no evidence to substantiate them from the literal perspective.

And then the 'spirit', on the basis of what comes to mind of its meaning, is the origin of life from which exudes power and consciousness. Thus to uphold the apparent connotation of the part of this verse that says *...and has strengthened them with a spirit from Himself...* means that the believers possess another spirit, one in addition to the human spirit which a believer shares with a disbeliever. This is the spirit which exudes onto the believers another life and is accompanied by a new power and consciousness. It is to this that the following verse points *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth* (6:122)? As well as the verse *Whoever works righteousness whether male or female and is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a good life* (16:97). *W*hat the verse (16:97) mentions of a good life means the accompaniment of the goodness of its effect, which is

1 The preposition *min* means 'from'. When this preposition is identified as *min al-ibtidā'iyya* it means the preposition is used to suggest a starting point from which something ensues. It could mean a starting point for or in terms of something ensuing from: a place (17:1); a point in time (9:108); a person/being (27:30); and a state/condition to another (2:257). Here, it has the third of the four meanings enunciated, that is, the meaning of the spirit being from or ensuing from God.

power and consciousness, which are the concomitants or the consequences of righteous deeds. These two (power and consciousness) are expressed as light in (6:122) cited above, and similar to it is the verse *O you who believe, be conscious of* (*your duty to*) *Allah and believe in His Messenger, and He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk, and forgive you, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful* (57:28).

This is a special, noble life. It has special effects which necessarily lead to the eternal happiness of mankind, and is in addition to the life shared between a believer and disbeliever, which in turn has shared effects. The former life has a special origin, which is the spirit of faith which the verse mentions, and is in addition to the spirit shared between the believer and disbeliever. Therefore, there is no reason for what they (the other exegetes) have mentioned such as: that the meaning of spirit is the light of the heart which is the light of knowledge by which tranquillity is obtained and that it (knowledge) was named spirit from the perspective of metonymy/synecdoche because it is the cause of an everlasting good life, or that it (knowledge) was named spirit from the perspective of allegory because its necessary consequence is the different kinds of knowledge which flow over the heart—and knowledge is the life of the heart just as ignorance is its death—and so it (knowledge) resembles the life-giving spirit (where all such meanings or interpretations for the spirit are denied).

The phrase ...*He shall make them enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they shall abide forever*.... is a beautiful promise to them (the believers) and a description of their blissful hereafterly life while the part of this verse that says ...*Allah being satisfied with them and they being satisfied with Him*... serves as a continuation of the previous statement and occurs as a justificatory explanation (*al-taʿlīl*) for it. God's satisfaction with them means His mercy for them because they rendered their faith sincere for Him while their satisfaction with Him and their joy and delight is due to what He had blessed them with of a good life and paradise.

The statement ...*Those are the* (*members of the*) *party of Allah. Hearken! The* (*members of the*) *party of Allah are undoubtedly prosperous* occurs as an honorable accolade for these sincere ones in their faith in that they are of the party of God (*ḥizbullāh*) just as those hypocrites who befriend and love the enemies of God are of the party of Satan (*ḥizb al-shayṭān*). The former are prosperous just as the latter are losers. The end part of this verse which says ...*Hearken! The party of Allah are*... is in the form of placing the apparent in place of the pronoun so that the speech may perform the task of a proverb.

Examining Narrations

(1) *Majmaʿ al-bayān* with respect to *Allah has decreed, 'I shall surely*

prevail, I and My messengers!' Truly Allah is Strong, Mighty (58:21). It is narrated that the Muslims, on seeing how God was granting them success and victory in conquering the towns, said the following: 'God will most surely allow us to conquer Byzantine and Persia' whereupon the hypocrites retorted: 'Do you think that Persia and Byzantine are like some of the towns which you have conquered?' At that, God revealed this verse.

Author's comment: It is clear that the report above is in the manner of the application of the verse's meaning (*taṭbīq al-āya*) to the event narrated in it. Examples of such reports are abundant such as, for example, it is transmitted with regards to the verse *You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the last day loving/befriending whoever opposes Allah and His Messenger even if they were their fathers or sons or brothers or tribesmen* (58:22) that it was revealed regarding Abū 'Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāḥ who killed his father in the battle of Badr, or as is transmitted in another report that this verse was revealed in respect of Abū Bakr. The Prophet was insulted in his presence whereupon Abū Bakr struck the offender who fell to the ground and this verse descended, or as in the case of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Thābit ibn Qays ibn al-Sham(m)ās who sought the Prophet's permission to visit his maternal uncle and was granted it. When he was about to set off, the Prophet recited this verse to him and to those around him. Finally, these verses do not agree with these reports in terms of an apparent or manifest connection.

(2) Al-Barrā' ibn 'Āzib narrates: 'The Messenger of God said: "The most reliable handle of faith is to love for the sake of God and to hate for the sake of God."'[1]

(3) Abū 'Abdillāh (al-Ṣādiq): 'There are two ears for every believer's heart, which are located inside him. An ear into which the doubt causing Satan spits or blows, and an ear into which the angel blows. Thus God aids and strengthens the believer by means of the angel and that is the meaning of His speech ...*He ... has strengthened them with a spirit from Himself*... (58:22).[2]

Author's comment: The report's meaning is not to interpret the *rūḥ* (spirit) with the angel; rather the angel accompanies the *rūḥ* (spirit) and works with it. God says *He sends down the angels with the spirit which is from His command*... (16:2).

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of al-Ṭayālisī and Ibn Abī Shayba from him.

2 *Al-Kāfī*, by means of the compiler's chain of transmission terminating at Abān ibn Taghlib from him.

(4) Abū Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) regarding the Prophetic utterance: 'When a man commits adultery the spirit of faith abandons him'. He (the Imām) said: 'That is with regards to His speech ...*He ... has strengthened them with a spirit from Himself*... (58:22). That is the spirit which abandons him'.[1]

(5) Abū Khadīja said: 'I once visited Abū al-Ḥasan who told me: "God has aided and strengthened the believer with a spirit. It is present with him every time he does a good deed and is God-conscious while it disappears from him every time he sins and violates (God's teachings). Thus it is present with him, elated and trembling with joy when he does good while it sinks into the earth (in dismay) when he does evil. So take care and look after your blessings, O servants of God, by reforming your souls, (and) you shall increase in certainty and shall win a precious and costly thing. May God have mercy on a man who intends to do good and carries it out or intends to do evil but refrains from it." Then he said: "We aid and strengthen the spirit by means of obedience to God and working for Him."'[2]

Author's comment: It has become clear from the foregoing, in the context of the verse (58:22) that this spirit is from the categories of the human spirit, which a believer obtains when he perfects his faith. It does not leave him just as the vegetable, animal, and human spirits shared between the believer and the disbeliever are from the categories of his spirit, which do not leave him. Nevertheless, it produces a beautiful form in the soul which perhaps fades or vanishes when it confronts an evil form which is its opposite. Thereafter it returns when the antithetical obstacles fade till it settles, stabilizes, and takes root, and the soul is molded and fashioned by it which is when it endures and abides and does not change or alter. From this it becomes apparent that the meaning of the Imām's statement '... (the spirit) is present with him...' and his statement '...it is with him...' means the presence of its form; the presence of its form which is capable of fading and vanishing, while the meaning of the Imām's statement '...it sinks into the earth....' means the fading of its form from the perspective of a figure of speech. Similar is the statement of the Messenger of God in the previous report where it says '...the spirit of faith abandons him...'

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End of Chapter 58

1 *Al-Kāfī*, by means of the compiler's chain of transmission terminating at Ibn Bukayr who asked the Imām about the relevant Prophetic utterance.

2 *Al-Kāfī*, by means of the compiler's chain of transmission terminating at Muḥammad ibn Sinān from him.

Chapter 59

Sūrah al-Hashr

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بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Introduction

The chapter refers to the story of the expulsion of Banu al- Naḍīr[1], the Jewish tribe, after they broke their covenant with the Muslims. It also mentions the false promises of support and steadfastness made by the hypocrites to Banū al-Naḍīr, their subsequent betrayal, and the divine rulings concerning the spoils from this event.[2]

Among the paramount verses in this chapter are the seven concluding ones, wherein Almighty God commands His servants to prepare for encountering Him through vigilance and self-accountability, highlighting the sublime nature of His speech and the exaltedness of His rank by extolling the magnificence of the Speaker—marked by His most beautiful names and lofty attributes.

The Sūrah is Madinan, which is apparent from the context of its verses.

Verses 1-10

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١﴾

(59:1) Whatever there is in the heavens glorifies Allah and whatever there is in the earth, and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.

This opening verse (of the chapter) aligns with the last verse of the chapter namely, "*He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Former. To Him belong the Best Names. Whatever there is in the heavens glorifies Him and* (*whatever there is in*) *the earth, and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise*" (59:24).

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1 The Banu al-Naḍīr were one of the three main Jewish tribes living in Medina before the arrival of the Prophet Muhammad. They were an influential tribe with considerable economic resources and strong fortifications around their settlements. The Banu al-Naḍīr, like the other Jewish tribes in the region, were involved in various aspects of the social and economic life of Medina, including agriculture, trade, and the forging of alliances. (Trans.)

2 The Sūrah takes its name from the banishment (*al-ḥashr*) of a Jewish tribe from Madinah, which is its main theme. (Trans.)

The Sūrah commences with His glorification, reflecting on the Jews' betrayal and their violation of the covenant mentioned within. It then addresses the hypocrites' deceitful assurances of victory to them, akin to those who had recently suffered the outcome of their actions. In consideration of what God made them taste, as a consequence of their scheming which was in accordance with what wisdom dictates, the verse aptly concludes with the phrase, "*and He is the Almighty, the Wise*."

هُوَ الَّذِى أَخْرَجَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مِن دِيَارِهِمْ لِأَوَّلِ الْحَشْرِ مَا ظَنَنتُمْ أَن يَخْرُجُوا وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُم مَّانِعَتُهُمْ حُصُونُهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ فَأَتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبُوا وَقَذَفَ فِى قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ يُخْرِبُونَ بُيُوتَهُم بِأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَيْدِى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِى الأَبْصَارِ ۝٢

(59:2) It is He who expelled the faithless belonging to the People of the Book from their homes at the outset of (their) en masse banishment. You did not think that they would go out, and they thought their fortresses would protect them from Allah. But Allah came at them from whence they did not reckon and He cast terror into their hearts. They demolish their houses with their own hands and the hands of the faithful. So take lesson, O you who have insight!

The term *hashr* means to banish a group with upheaval and the phrase "the outset of en masse banishment" (*li-awwal al-ḥashr*) is a grammatical structure linking an attribute to the entity it describes. Here, the letter "*lām*" conveys the meaning 'at the time,' akin to the verse: " *Maintain the prayer from* (or, at the time of) *the sun's decline*" (Al-Isra':78). This means: God is the one who expelled the Banu al-Naḍīr among the Jews from their homes during their initial expulsion from the Arabian Peninsula.[1]

Then God highlighted the significance of their expulsion, stating: *"You did not think that they would go out,"* given the apparent strength, resilience, and fortifications you observed in them. *"and they thought their fortresses would protect them from Allah"*—believing that God could not overpower them within their fortresses. Their trust in their strongholds as a defence was deemed to be

1 The term *al-ḥashr* generally refers to the act of gathering or assembling, but in certain contexts, particularly in Islamic eschatology, it refers to the gathering of people on the Day of Judgment. However, in the historical context of the expulsion of Banu al-Naḍīr, it denotes the act of gathering a community for the purpose of expulsion or banishment. The term connotes a sense of disturbance and upheaval, as the expulsion is typically not a peaceful or voluntary relocation. (Trans.)

against God rather than the Muslims because their eviction is ascribed to the Almighty in the preceding statement, and so is casting terror into their hearts as mentioned towards the verse's end. The statement implies that they possessed numerous strongholds.

God then addressed the flaw in their assumption and their miscalculation with the statement: "*But Allah came at them from whence they did not reckon*," which means His divine will infiltrated them not through the expected means of strongholds and routes, but from within, through their hearts: "*and He cast terror into their hearts*." This terror is a profound fear that engulfs the heart. "*They demolish their homes with their own hands*" to prevent them from being seized by the believers after they left—a manifestation of His supreme authority over them, driving His will through their very hands, "*and the hands of the believers*," for He commanded them thus and enabled them to fulfill His command and execute His intent. "*So take lesson*," serves as a cautionary note for "*O you who have insight*!" encouraging them to contemplate God's response to their opposition towards Him and His Messenger.

Some suggest that they demolished their homes as a means to escape, while the believers did so to establish their prayers. Another interpretation posits that the "destruction of the homes" symbolizes the collapse of their societal order. They brought ruin upon themselves by breaking their covenants, and further destruction came at the hands of the believers sent to fight them.

The apparent statement "they demolish their houses" seems to elucidate the phrase "*But Allah came at them from whence they did not reckon*." Contextually, this effect follows their breach of covenants.

وَلَوْلا أَن كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجَلاء لَعَذَّبَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ عَذَابُ النَّارِ﴿٣﴾

(59:3) If Allah had not ordained banishment for them, He would have surely punished them in this world, and in the Hereafter there is for them the punishment of the Fire.

Here, "banishment" implies abandoning one's homeland, symbolizing God's judgment for them. The worldly punishment alluded to refers to their expulsion, killing, or captivity.

The meaning is: If it weren't for God's decree that they depart from their residences and forsake their homeland, they would have faced the punishment in this world, akin to the fate of Banū Qurayẓa, encompassing the punishment of displacement, execution, or captivity. Moreover, in the Hereafter, they are destined for the torment of the fire.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَاقُّوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَمَن يُشَاقِّ اللَّهَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴿٤﴾

(59:4) That is because they opposed Allah and His Messenger; and whoever opposes Allah, indeed Allah is severe in retribution.

The term "opposition" (*shāqū*) connotes persistent defiance. The context underscores their eviction and their justified punishment, had it not been decreed for them to be exiled.

By highlighting opposition to God with the phrase, "*whoever opposes Allah*" specifically, after mentioning both God and His Messenger with the statement, "*they opposed Allah and His Messenger*," it subtly indicates that opposing the Messenger equates to opposing God. The remaining message is self-evident.

مَا قَطَعْتُم مِّن لِّينَةٍ أَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوهَا قَائِمَةً عَلَىٰ أُصُولِهَا فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلِيُخْزِيَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ۝٥

(59:5) Whatever palm trees you cut down or left standing on their roots, it was by Allah's will, and in order that He may disgrace the transgressors.

al-Rāghib has pointed out that the term *al-līnah* (translated here as "palm trees") refers to the tender palm tree, without singling out a specific type. It's narrated that when the Prophet instructed the felling of these trees, some protested, exclaiming, "O Muhammad! You once preached against causing mischief on the land, so why destroy these trees?" In response, this verse was revealed. It emphasizes that any tree they cut or spared was by God's will. This divine decree serves profound wisdoms, one of which is to disgrace the defiantly disobedient, referring to Banū al-Naḍīr.

The phrase, "that He may disgrace the transgressors" (*wa liyukhzī al-fāsiqīn*), employs the "*lām*" to indicate causation. It alludes to an omitted context, suggesting that the act of cutting or sparing (the trees) by God's command serves specific purposes, one of which is to disgrace the transgressors. This is analogous to the verse, "*Thus did We show Abraham the dominions of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those who possess certitude*" (Al-An'am: 75).

وَمَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ مِنْهُمْ فَمَا أَوْجَفْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَلَا رِكَابٍ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهُ عَلَىٰ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝٦

(59:6) The spoils that Allah gave to His Apostle from them, you did not spur any horse for its sake, nor any riding camel, but Allah makes His apostles prevail over whomever He wishes, and Allah has power over all things.

The term *al-Ifā'ah* signifies the act of returning from the spoils of war. The pronoun "from them" (*The spoils that Allah gave to His Apostle from them*) specifically points to Banū al-Naḍīr, referring to their wealth.

The word *ījāf* (to spur) denotes propelling an animal with haste and strain. While *al-Khayl* translates to horse and *al-Rikāb* means camels. The phrase "*any horse for its sake, nor any riding camel*" serves as the object for "without you having spurred," with the additional *min* used for emphasis.

The meaning here is that the wealth of Banū al-Naḍīr, which God returned to His Messenger, was specifically designated for him alone to possess and control. This was achieved without any mounted combat using horses or camels, due to the proximity of their fortresses to Madinah. Rather, the approach was on foot. However, it's God's prerogative to empower His Messengers over whomsoever He wills, emphasizing His omnipotence over all matters. Thus, the Prophet was given authority over Banū al-Naḍīr and their spoils, allowing him discretion in their distribution and use.

مَّا أَفَاء اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى فَلِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِى الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ كَيْ لا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الأَغْنِيَاء مِنكُمْ وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٧﴾

(59:7) The spoils that Allah gave to His Apostle from the people of the townships, are for Allah and the Apostle, the relatives and the orphans, the needy and the traveller, so that they do not circulate among the rich among you. Take whatever the Apostle gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you, and be wary of Allah. Indeed Allah is severe in retribution.

This verse seemingly provides clarity regarding how the spoils (or booty) mentioned in the preceding verse should be distributed. Moreover, it broadens the scope, suggesting that the spoils from townspeople encompass more than just those from the Banū al-Naḍīr and similar groups.

And the expression "*for Allah and for the Messenger*" signifies that a share from the wealth is designated for the cause of God, which is to be administered and utilized in God's way according to the judgment of the Messenger. Additionally, from this wealth, there is a portion that the Messenger appropriates for himself. It is not correct to regard the inclusion of God's name alongside the beneficiaries as merely a formality for seeking blessings.

The phrase "(*for*) *the relatives*" refers to the kin of the Prophet. It does not extend to the relatives of all the faithful, which is clearly understood. The term "orphans" is specifically meant to address the destitute among them, as implied by the context. The orphans are mentioned separately and before "the needy," although the latter encompasses them, highlighting the special attention to be given to orphans.

The Imams of the Prophet's Household have conveyed that "the relatives" are indeed the members of the Prophet's Household, and that "the orphans," "the needy," and "the traveller" referred to pertain to them.

The phrase "*so that they do not circulate among the rich among you*" articulates the divine decree over the spoils of war to prevent its circulation among the affluent. Here, circulation denotes the wealth that passes around exclusively among a select group.

Furthermore, the command "*Take whatever the Messenger gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you*" instructs followers to accept whatever share of the spoils the Messenger allocates to them, as he did with the emigrants and a number of the Ansār, and to desist from what he prohibits. This guidance implies that requests were made to the Prophet for an equal distribution of the spoils, prompting the directive that such matters are to be referred to the Prophet's judgment, and he is entrusted with the responsibility to allocate these resources as detailed in the verse.

The verse, when considered without its immediate context, broadly includes any decree issued by the Prophet, encompassing all that he instructed or prohibited. The phrase "*and be wary of Allah. Indeed Allah is severe in retribution*." serves as a caution to them not to contravene the Prophet, reinforcing the earlier statement: "*whatever the Messenger gives you...*"

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِن دِيَارِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا وَيَنصُرُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ ﴿٨﴾

(59:8) (They are also) for the poor Emigrants who have been expelled from their homes and (wrested of) their possessions, who seek grace from Allah and (His) pleasure and help Allah and His Apostle. It is they who are the truthful.

It is said that the phrase "For the poor" may replace the phrase "For the relatives" and subsequent (mentions). The invocation of God's name is understood as for the sake of blessings, indicating that the spoils are reserved for the Prophet and the impoverished among the emigrants. It is reported in a narration that the Prophet apportioned the spoils from Banū al-Naḍīr exclusively among the emigrants, allotting nothing to the Ansār except to a handful of their destitute, numbering two or three.

There is an opinion suggesting that the phrase "For the poor emigrants" serves as a substitution for references to orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer, making those entitled to shares the Prophet, his relatives of all economic statuses, and the destitute among the emigrants, encompassing their orphans, the needy, and their wayfarers. This may be the intended meaning of those who

say that the phrase: "For the poor emigrants" clarifies the term 'the needy' in the previous verse.

A more fitting interpretation, in line with what was previously conveyed by the Imams of the Household, is to view the phrase "For the poor emigrants" as an illustrative example of the allocation for God's cause, as hinted by the phrase "for God." This is not to imply that the poor emigrants are direct shareholders in the spoils, but rather that allocating to them and giving them their due is, in essence, an instance of spending in God's way.

In essence, the meaning is that God, has granted the spoils and entrusted them to the Prophet, granting him the authority to allocate them at his discretion. Guidance was then provided on the avenues for their distribution: the way of God, His Messenger, their relatives, their orphans, their needy, and the wayfarer from among them. Following this, He indicated an actual instance of spending in God's way, among which are the poor emigrants. The Messenger is to disburse to them according to what he deems appropriate.

Based on this understanding, the narrations indicating that the Prophet apportioned the spoils of Banū al-Naḍīr among the emigrants and did not bestow anything upon the Ansār except to three of their impoverished: Abū Dujānah Samak b. Kharshah, Sahl b. Ḥunayf, and al-Ḥārith b. al-Simmah, should be understood as allocations made to them in God's way, not because these individuals were designated shareholders of the spoils.

Regarding the statement, "*for the poor Emigrants who have been expelled from their homes and their possessions*," it specifically denotes the Muslims who migrated from Mecca to Medina before the conquest, those who were coercively expelled by the disbelievers of Mecca, leaving behind their homes and wealth as they migrated to the city of the Messenger.

The phrase, "*who seek grace from Allah and* (*His*) *pleasure*," defines 'grace' as sustenance signifying their quest for worldly provision and His pleasure in the Hereafter.

The statement, "*and help Allah and His Messenger*," signifies that they assist God and His Messenger with their possessions and their lives. The subsequent phrase, "*it is they who are the truthful*," confirms the sincerity of their commitment, as they embody these virtues.

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّؤُوا الدَّارَ وَالإِيمَانَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ وَمَن يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩﴾

(59:9) (They are as well) for those who were settled in the land and (abided) in faith before them, who love those who migrate toward

> them, and do not find in their hearts any need for that which is given to them, but prefer (the Immigrants) to themselves, though need be their own lot. And those who are saved from their own greed —it is they who are the felicitous.

This is introduced as a new statement to commend the Ansār, to comfort their hearts as they were not partakers in the spoils. The subject "*for those who were settled*" refers to the Ansār, the predicate of which is "*who love those who migrate toward them*."[1] The intended meaning of "*settled in the land*" is to populate it and as an allegory implying to establish a religious community that provides sanctuary for the believers. The word "faith" pairs with the word "land" (or "home" in some translations) suggesting that establishing and nurturing faith is about rectifying its deficiencies through practice, allowing for the fulfillment of its requirements for obedience and closeness to God without the constraints experienced in Mecca.

It is conceivable that the term '*faith*' is linked to '*settled*,' with the implicit verb of action being omitted, implying that they gave precedence to faith."

The phrase "*And those who were settled*" is said to be linked to the preceding mention of "*the emigrants*," suggesting that both groups, the Ansār and the emigrants, had entitlements to the spoils. However, this perspective is questioned by historical accounts which imply that the Prophet allocated the spoils exclusively to the emigrants, apart from a nominal sum granted to three needy members of the Ansār. In rebuttal to this perspective, it is argued that the structure of the narrative implies a continuity of context rather than introducing a separate clause. This implies that the Ansār are included in the distribution. The fact that even a small number of Ansār received a portion undermines the notion that they were entirely excluded from the spoils. Thus, the act of giving to the three destitute individuals among the Ansār serves as an indication of their collective inclusion in the share. Ultimately, it was within the Prophet's purview to decide the distribution of the spoils. He exercised this discretion according to his judgment, and it was his decision to divide the spoils predominantly among the emigrants, setting a precedent that, while inclusive, was selective in its execution.

Considering the previous context where the phrase "*for the poor*," and similar expressions clarify particular beneficiaries of the designated share for

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1 In this case, the context implies that the Ansār (the helpers) did not just physically settle (them) in their land, but they also 'settled' or gave a home to their faith, meaning they embraced and gave priority to their faith in their lives and actions. (Trans.)

charitable causes, it is appropriate to understand the phrases "*And those who were settled*," and the forthcoming statement "*And those who came in after them*," as extensions of the discourse on "*the emigrants*" rather than introducing separate, standalone sections. (This explanation maintains the narrative's continuity by connecting these groups directly to the earlier discussed emigrants.)[1]

Indeed, the instances where he (the Prophet)) distributed to the three individuals corroborate this explanation. If the allocation was exclusively for the impoverished emigrants, then none of the Ansār, not even those three, would have been granted anything. Conversely, if the entitlement was similar for the needy among the Ansār as for the emigrants—and the verse seems to indicate that there were indeed destitute individuals among them, a fact corroborated by historical accounts—then more than just those three impoverished individuals from the Ansār would have received a share, akin to the comprehensive provision given to the needy emigrants.

So the pronoun "*before them*" in the phrase "*And those who were settled in the land and* (*abided*) *in faith before them*" refers to the emigrants, indicating the period before their migration and subsequent arrival in Medina.

The statement, "*who love those who migrate toward them*" reflects the Ansār's affection for those who have migrated towards them, a sentiment rooted in the latter's migration from a land of disbelief to a land of faith and into the fellowship of Muslims.

Furthermore, the statement "*and do not find in their hearts any need for that which is given to them*" in which the pronouns "(*they*) *do not find*" and "*their hearts*" speaks of the Ansār's hearts harboring no sense of need or deficiency for the provisions bestowed upon the emigrants. It implies that the Ansār harbored no ill will or jealousy towards the emigrants concerning the division of spoils, feeling no constriction in their hearts from the share allocated to the emigrants, nor any envy for it.

It has been suggested that the term "*need*" in this context refers to the feelings that result from unfulfilled needs, specifically resentment.

Regarding the phrase "*but prefer* (*the Immigrants*) *to themselves, though*

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1 Due to the complexity of the original exegesis, this section has been paraphrased for clarity to more accurately reflect the intended explanations of the author. The author goes on to discuss how the phrases "And those who were settled," and "And those who came after them," should be understood. It implies that these phrases should not be taken as starting new topics or subjects. Instead, they should be seen as directly connected to a previous discussion about "the emigrants." In essence, the author is advising that these phrases continue the subject that was being discussed previously (the emigrants), building on it rather than diverting into a separate subject. (Trans.)

need (or poverty) *be their own lot*," to "prefer" means to select and prioritize something over other options. Here, "*need*" signifies poverty and hardship. Al-Raghib comments that the emptiness of a house is a metaphor for such poverty, referring to the state of privation as a lack that remains unfilled, similar to how it is expressed by the term 'emptiness'.

Thus the phrase (*but prefer* (*the Immigrants*) *to themselves, though need* (or poverty) *be their own lot*) conveys that they prioritize the needs of the emigrants above their own, even in the face of their poverty and necessity. This quality is a more profound and impactful praise than the previous one, emphasizing their altruism. It's as though it is said: They do not covet what the emigrants possess; instead, they place the emigrants' needs before their own, despite their own state of poverty and need.

Regarding the statement, "*And those who are saved* (yuqā) *from their own greed* (shuḥ)—*it is they who are the felicitous*," Al-Raghib says: "Stinginess (*shuḥ*) is miserliness combined with an intense yearning typically seen in habitual matters. 'Shielded' (*yuqā*) is derived from the concept of protection, suggesting divine protection."

Thus the meaning derived is: "Those whom God protects (*yuqā*) from the stinginess (*shuḥ*) of their own soul whether it be from spending what is in their possession or envying that which others possess, they are indeed the successful ones."[1]

وَالَّذِينَ جَاؤُوا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالإِيمَانِ
وَلا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

(59:10) And (also for) those who came in after them, who say, 'Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who were our forerunners in the faith, and do not put any rancor in our hearts toward the faithful. Our Lord, You are indeed most kind and merciful.'

This verse serves as either a new subject or as a continuation similar to

1 The gist of this lengthy explanation by the author is as follows: The Ansār, meaning 'helpers,' are commended for prioritizing faith and providing refuge to the emigrants in Medina. Their love for the emigrants is portrayed as selfless, with their actions showing no resentment or envy for the spoils received by the emigrants. Historical accounts suggest the Prophet allocated spoils primarily to the emigrants, but the inclusion of even a few Ansār counters the notion of their exclusion. This act symbolizes their collective entitlement and reflects their magnanimity, as they preferred the emigrants over themselves despite their own need. The success is ascribed to those protected from greed, indicating divine grace in overcoming stinginess and promoting generosity. (Trans.)

the preceding phrase, "*those who were settled in the land and* (*abided*) *in faith before them, who love those who migrate toward them*." If the verse is interpreted as starting a new subject, then the phrase "*those who came in after them*" is a noun phrase acting as the subject of the sentence. The rest of the verse, "*who say, 'Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren...'*," would then be the predicate.[1]

The reference to "*those who came in after them*" signifies those who embraced faith after the Muhajirūn (emigrants) and the Ansār (helpers), following the cessation of the migration with the conquest (of Mecca), and it has been interpreted to mean that they are the successors.

Their plea, "*Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who were our forerunners in the faith*," reflects a prayer seeking forgiveness not only for themselves but also for the early believers. The term "our brethren" underscores their view of them as an extension of their own selves, echoing the divine proclamation, "*You are of one another*" (Al-Nisa: 25). This articulation conveys their profound love and solidarity, desiring for their brethren what they desire for themselves.

Hence, they appended their prayer with, "*and do not put any rancor in our hearts toward the faithful. Our Lord, You are indeed most kind and merciful*." They implored God to keep their hearts free from any rancor (*ghill*) towards fellow believers, with "rancor" signifying deep-seated enmity. The phrase "*toward the faithful*" encompasses all the faithful, both contemporary and preceding, subtly indicating that their sole pursuit is the shared bond of faith.

Examining Narrations

(6) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, concerning the verse of God Almighty: "*It is He who expelled the faithless belonging to the People of the Book from their homes...*," it is said: The reason behind this is that there were three tribes of Jews in Medina: Banū al-Naḍīr, Qurayẓah, and Qaynuqā', and there was a covenant and a set term between them and the Messenger of God. They broke their covenant. The instigation of Banū al-Naḍīr in breaking their covenant was when the Messenger of God came to them asking for a loan to pay the blood money for two men whom one of his companions had killed by deceit, meaning he wanted to borrow (money). Among them was Ka'b b. al-Ashraf. When the Prophet entered upon Ka'b, he said: "Welcome, O Abū al-Qāsim, and peace." He stood up as if to prepare food for him and thought to himself about killing the

1 The nuanced discussion is about how this part of the verse relates to the surrounding text—whether it introduces a new group of people as the main subject of a new sentence or continues the narrative about the Muhajirūn and Ansār. (Trans.)

Messenger of God and ambushing his companions. Then Gabriel came down and informed him of their intentions. The Messenger of God returned to Medina and said to Muḥammad b. Maslamah al-Anṣārī: "Go to Banū al-Naḍīr and inform them that God the Almighty has informed me of your treachery. Either you leave our city, or you agree to war." They said, "We will leave your lands." Then ʿAbdullah b. Ubay sent to them: "Do not leave, and withstand Muhammad in war. For I will support you with my people and allies. If you leave, I will leave with you, and if you fight, I will fight with you." So they stayed, fortified their strongholds, and prepared for battle. They sent to the Messenger of God (a message saying), "We will not leave, do what you will." The Messenger of God stood and declared greatness (by saying 'Allahu Akbar'), and his companions did the same. He said to the Commander of the Faithful: "Lead towards Banū al-Naḍīr." The Commander of the Faithful took the flag and advanced. The Messenger of God came and surrounded their fortress. ʿAbdullah b. Ubay betrayed them. Whenever the Messenger of God appeared at the forefront of their houses, they fortified what faced him and destroyed what was behind him. A man among them who had a beautiful house would destroy it, and the Messenger of God had ordered the cutting of their date palms, so they were distressed by this and said, "O Muhammad, does God command you to corruption? If these (palms) belong to you, take them, but if they are ours, do not cut them down." Later they said, "O Muhammad, we will leave your land, give us our wealth." He said, "No, but you may leave with what your camels can carry." They did not accept this at first but stayed for days. Then they said, "We will leave, and we may take what our camels can carry." He replied, "No, but you will leave and not carry anything. Whoever among you we find carrying anything, we will kill." So they left on those terms. Some of them settled in Fadak and the Valley of Qura, and some left for Syria. God then revealed about them, "*It is He who expelled the faithless...* to the end of the verse, *indeed Allah is severe in retribution.*" And about their reproach for cutting down the palms, God revealed, "*Whatever palm trees you cut down or left standing on their roots, it was by Allah's will...*" to the end of the verse, "*Our Lord, You are indeed most kind and merciful*." And about ʿAbdullah b. Ubay and his companions, God revealed, "*Have you not regarded the hypocrites...*" to the end of the verse, "*then they will not be helped.*" (59:11-12)

Author's comment: The narration portrays a critical event where the

integrity of a peace treaty was violated, leading to significant consequences for those involved, reflecting the weighty matters of trust and treachery in such historical and theological contexts.

(7) In *Majma' al-bayaan*, narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās: The Prophet besieged them until he reached every extent, and they conceded to what he desired from them. He reconciled with them on the condition that their blood would be spared, and they would be exiled from their land and homeland, to be settled in Adhri'āt in Greater Syria. He allocated a camel and a water skin for every three of them. Thus, they left for Adhri'āt in Greater Syria and Jericho, except for the households of Abū al-Huqayq and Huyayy b. Akhtab, who joined others at Khaybar, while a faction among them proceeded to Al-Hirah.

(8) And in the same source, from Muhammad b. Maslamah: The Prophet sent him to Banū an-Nadīr and instructed him to grant them a three-night respite to prepare for exile.

(9) In the same source, it is reported from Muḥammad b. Isḥāq: The exile of Banū al-Naḍīr took place after the Prophet's return from Uḥud, and the conquest of Banū Qurayẓa occurred following his return from the Battle of the Trench. Al-Zuhrī believed that the expulsion of Banū al-Naḍīr happened before Uḥud, six months after the Battle of Badr.

(10) Also, from Ibn ʿAbbās, it is related: The verse of God "What God restored to His Messenger from the people of the towns..." refers to the wealth of the disbelievers of the towns, namely Qurayẓa and Banū al-Naḍīr who were in Medina, and Khaybar, Fadak which is three miles from Medina, and the villages of ʿUraynah and Yanbu. God made these spoils exclusively for His Messenger to decide upon as he wished, informing that all belonged to him. Hence, some said, "Why not divide it?" Thus, the verse was revealed.

(11) And from Ibn ʿAbbās, he said: The Messenger of God declared on the day of Banū al-Naḍīr's defeat to the Anṣār: "If you wish, you may share your properties and homes with the Muhājirūn, and they will share with you in this bounty. But if you desire, you can keep your homes and properties, and nothing of this bounty will be divided among you." The Anṣār responded: "Rather, we will share our homes and wealth with them, preferring them over ourselves for the bounty, and we will not partake with them in it." Consequently, the verse "And they give preference over themselves..." was revealed.

Author's comment: Various other narratives have been reported concerning their act of altruism and the revelation of the verse in this context. It seems

that these narratives are instances of applying the verse to the event. The previously mentioned meanings have been narrated through numerous and differing channels in "*Al-Durr al-manthūr*."

(12) In "*al-Tawḥīd*," related from (Imam) ʿAlī: He was asked about verses that were confusing to the questioner. In explaining the verse where the Almighty says, "*But Allah came at them from whence they did not reckon*," (the Imam said) it means that He sent a punishment upon them that they did not anticipate.

(13) In *Tahdhīb*, with its chain of narration from Al-Halabi from Abū ʿAbdillāh, peace be upon him, it is stated: The term *al-fay'* as mentioned in the verse, "*The spoils that Allah gave to His Apostle from them*," refers to wealth that was obtained without bloodshed or killing, and *anfāl* is similar in nature, possessing the same status.

(14) And in *Majma'*, narrated by Al-Minhāl b. ʿUmar from ʿAlī b. Al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon them, regarding the verse, "*the relatives and the orphans, the needy and the traveller*," he explained: They pertain to our relatives, our orphans, our needy, and our wayfarers.

Author's comment: This meaning has also been narrated in *al-Tahdhīb* from Sulaym b. Qays who reported from Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him). Furthermore, it has been stated in *al-Majma'*, after citing the aforementioned narration: "All the jurists have said: they are the orphans of the people in general, and likewise the poor and the wayfarers. This has also been narrated from them (the Imams)."

(15) In *Al-Kāfī*, through his chain of narrators from Zurārah, it is reported that he heard Abū Jaʿfar and Abū ʿAbd Allāh (peace be upon them) say: Verily, God, the Mighty and Glorious, entrusted His Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) with the matter of His creation to see how they obey him. Then they recited this verse: "*Take whatever the Apostle gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you*."

Author's comment: The narrations from them (the Imams) on this matter are numerous, and what is meant by entrusting the affair of His creation, as appears from the narrations, is His confirmation of what the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) legislated for them, mandating obedience to him in that regard, and his governance over the people's affairs. As for the entrustment meaning that the Exalted Himself has abdicated that responsibility to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), such a concept is impossible.

(16) In *Al-Kāfī*, with its chain of transmission from Abū ʿAbd Allāh (peace be upon him), it is narrated in a hadith: "Faith is a part of the other, and it is a place; similarly, Islam is a place, and disbelief is a place."

(17) In *al-Maḥāsin*, narrated through his chain of transmission from Abu ʻUbaydah, who quotes Abu Jaʻfar (peace be upon him) in a narration, he said: "O Ziyād, alas! What is religion if not love? Do you not consider the words of God: '*If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins*'? And do you not see God's words to Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him): '*He has endeared faith to you and has made it appealing in your hearts*,' and He said: '*They love those who emigrated to them*'? He declared: Religion is love and love is religion."

(18) In *al-Majmaʻ*, it is narrated in the tradition: "Covetousness and faith do not coexist in the heart of a Muslim man, nor do the dust in the path of God and the smoke of Hell coexist within a Muslim man."

(19) And in *al-Faqīh*, al-Faḍl b. Abī Qurrat al-Sammandī narrates, saying: Abu ʻAbdullāh (peace be upon him) asked me, "Do you know who the covetous one is?" I replied, "He is the miser." He said, "Covetousness is more severe than miserliness. Indeed, a miser is stingy with what is in his own possession, but the covetous one is avaricious for what is in the hands of others and over what is in his own hand to the extent that he sees nothing in the hands of others without wishing it were his, by lawful or unlawful means, and he is not satisfied with what God the Almighty has provided him."

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Verses 11-17

This section references the state of the hypocrites who promised the Banū al-Naḍīr their support in battle if they were attacked and pledged to accompany them if they were forced to leave. However, they reneged on their promises, belying what they had vowed.

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أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا يَقُولُونَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَئِنْ أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا وَإِن قُوتِلْتُمْ لَنَنصُرَنَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١١﴾

(59:11) Have you not regarded the hypocrites who say to their brethren, the faithless from among the People of the Book: 'If you are expelled, we will surely go out with you, and we will never obey anyone against you, and if you are fought against we will surely help you,' and Allah bears witness that they are indeed liars.

The term 'brethren' is similar to 'brothers,' a plural of 'brother.' The concept of brotherhood implies a shared affiliation, typically to a father, but it extends metaphorically to those sharing a common belief, friendship, or the like. The term 'brothers' is often used for those related by lineage to a father, while 'brethren' is commonly used for those who share beliefs and similar aspects, as noted by scholars.

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The interrogative form in the verse expresses astonishment. Those who practiced hypocrisy refer to ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy and his companions. "*Their brethren, the faithless from among the People of the Book*" are identified as the Banū al-Naḍīr, as the context of the following verses suggests. It talks about a group from the People of the Book who were debating between exile and battle after another group had faced the same dilemma, and the only group fitting this description after the Banū Qaynuqāʿ are the Banū al-Naḍīr.

The pronouncement, "*If you are expelled, we will surely go out with you, and we will never obey anyone against you, and if you are fought against we will surely help you*," is the claim of the hypocrites. The '*lam*' in 'if you are expelled' (*la'in ukhrijtum*) denotes emphasis (or an oath), that is, they swear that if the Muslims drive you from your homes, they too will exit their homes to stand with you and will never heed anyone who advises them to abandon you, ever. Should the Muslims engage you in battle, they vow to support you against them.

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However, the subsequent declaration, "*and Allah bears witness that they are indeed liars*," directly contradicts the hypocrites' promise, clearly indicating that they will not keep their word.

لَئِنْ أُخْرِجُوا لا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَئِن قُوتِلُوا لا يَنصُرُونَهُمْ وَلَئِن نَّصَرُوهُمْ لَيُوَلُّنَّ الأَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لا يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

(59:12) Surely, if they were expelled they would not go out with them, and if they were fought against they would not help them, and were they to help them they would surely turn their backs (to flee) and then they would not be helped.

This a detailed refutation of their promise after His general declaration of their lying, "*and Allah bears witness that they are indeed liars*." The emphatic oath is reiterated here, stressing that, I swear, if the Banū al-Naḍīr are expelled, the hypocrites will not join them, and I swear, if they face combat, they will not come to their support.

The statement, "*and were they to help them they would surely turn their backs* (*to flee*) *and then they would not be helped*," points out that the hypocrites' support, in the unlikely event it were to be given—which it most certainly will not—would not be enduring or beneficial. Instead, they would flee in retreat and subsequently receive no assistance; they would be left to face destruction unaided.

لَأَنتُمْ أَشَدُّ رَهْبَةً فِي صُدُورِهِم مِّنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لّا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

(59:13) Indeed they have a greater awe of you in their hearts than of Allah. That is because they are a lot who do not understand.

The statement, "*Indeed they have a greater awe of you in their hearts than of Allah*," addresses the hypocrites with the use of plural pronouns, and 'awe' here denotes a profound sense of dread. This verse explains the rationale behind the (preceding) statement "*and were they to help them they would surely turn their backs*," meaning that the reason they would not stand their ground is due to their fear of you, which surpasses their fear of God. Thus, they would neither face you in combat nor maintain their position in support of you.

And the rationale for their greater fear of the believers compared to their fear of God is elucidated with the statement, "*That is because they are a lot who do not understand*." In other words, this fear towards you exists due to their lack of true understanding. If they were to properly understand that all matters are decreed by God the Exalted, and that no other has any authority—be it Muslims or others—and that no one besides Him has the capability to bring about good or harm, benefit or injury, except by His permission and strength, then they would only fear Him, the Almighty and Majestic.

لا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ جَمِيعًا إِلاَّ فِي قُرًى مُّحَصَّنَةٍ أَوْ مِن وَرَاء جُدُرٍ بَأْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيدٌ

تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيعًا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ شَتَّىٰ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

(59:14) They will not fight against you in a body except in fortified townships or from behind walls. Their might is great among themselves. You suppose them to be a body, but their hearts are disunited. That is because they are a lot who do not apply reason,

This illustrates the result of their collective fear and cowardice. It conveys that neither the Banū al-Naḍīr nor the hypocrites will engage you in an open battle. Instead, they will confront you either from the confines of well-fortified towns or from the protection of walls, without coming forth openly.

The phrase, "*Their might is great among themselves*" indicates that they are ruthless and aggressive towards one another. However, when they face you in battle and lay eyes on you, they are stricken with cowardice due to the terror that God has cast into their hearts.

Moreover, the statement, "*You suppose them to be a body, but their hearts are disunited*," highlights the misconception that they are cohesive in harmony and unity. In reality, their hearts are dispersed and lack unity, and this disunity is a major contributor to their disgrace and defeat.

That is because they are a lot who do not apply reason, and if they did apply reason, they would unite and harmonize their stance.

كَمَثَلِ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيبًا ذَاقُوا وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾

(59:15) like those who, recently before them, tasted the evil consequences of their conduct, and there is a painful punishment for them.

This verse highlights the notion of an unfavorable outcome. The word "recently" serves as an adverbial expression (that relates to time), indicating that the events occurred in the near past.

The phrase "*Like those*" refers to an implicit comparison where it is understood as "Their situation is akin to the example." It illustrates the similitude of Banū al-Naḍīr's actions to those who preceded them. Specifically, it refers to Banū al-Naḍīr of the Jews, who broke the covenant. Likewise, the hypocrites deceitfully promised them aid, which resulted in their eventual expulsion. This mirrors the earlier instance of Banu Qaynuqā', another Jewish tribe from Medina. They breached their treaty after the Battle of Badr, leading to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) banishing them to Adhri'at. Despite the hypocrites' assurances to intercede with the Prophet on their behalf and to prevent their exile, they reneged on their word. Consequently, Banū Qaynuqā' endured the adverse outcomes of their actions and face a severe punishment in the afterlife. It is also posited that the reference to those "before

them" pertains to the disbelievers of Mecca during the Battle of Badr. However, the former explanation aligns more closely with the context.

In any event, the example is specifically directed at Banū al-Naḍīr and not the hypocrites, according to the indications provided by the context.

كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلإِنسَانِ اكْفُرْ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

> (59:16) (Or) like Satan, when he prompts man to renounce faith, then, when he renounces faith, he says, 'Indeed I am absolved of you. Indeed I fear Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.'

Contextually this serves as an example for the hypocrites. It illustrates their deception of Banū al-Naḍīr with a false promise of help (or victory), followed by their betrayal at the moment of necessity.

The apparent context clearly indicates that 'Satan' and 'man' refer to their respective species, highlighting Satan's deception of humanity. He lures humans into disbelief by beautifying the transient pleasures of life and enticing them away from the truth with false promises and elusive dreams. When the realities of the Hereafter begin to dawn and the individual realizes that the worldly aspirations he was beguiled by were mere mirages—a deception, an illusion to toy with him—Satan renounces him. Satan fails to uphold his promises and declares, "*Indeed I am absolved of you. Indeed I fear Allah, the Lord of all the worlds*."

To summarize, the example of the hypocrites who incited the Banū al-Naḍīr to defy the Prophet with promises of support, only to betray them and go back on their word, parallels the function of Satan. He entices humans into disbelief with deceitful promises, only to disavow them upon their disbelief at the moment when support is most needed.

There is also a perspective that the example alludes to the tale of Barṣīṣa, the devout man who was seduced by Satan into immorality, leading him to fornicate with a woman and subsequently to disbelief. This story will be elaborated upon in the subsequent narrative discourse, God willing!

It has been suggested that the previous example referenced in the verse "*like those who, recently*" corresponds to the disbelievers of Mecca during the Battle of Badr, as mentioned earlier. In this allegory, the figure of the man is meant to be Abū Jahl. Satan's incitement to disbelief is detailed in the narration by the Almighty: "*When Satan made their deeds seem decorous to them, and said, 'No one shall overcome you today from among all mankind, and I will stand by you.' But when the two hosts sighted each other, he took to his heels, saying, 'Indeed I am quit of you. I see what you do not see. Indeed I fear Allah, and Allah is severe in retribution*'" (8:48).

Accordingly, Satan's proclamation, "*Indeed, I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds*," is uttered in earnest fear, as he dreaded the torment from the angels sent to aid the believers during the Battle of Badr. However, in light of the former two views, such a declaration is considered to be a form of scorn and humiliation.

فَكَانَ عَاقِبَتَهُمَا أَنَّهُمَا فِي النَّارِ خَالِدَيْنِ فِيهَا وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

(59:17) So the fate of both is that they will be in the Fire, to remain in it (forever). Such is the requital of the wrongdoers.

This verse clearly employs dual pronouns to denote Satan and the human being referred to in the analogy. It elucidates the consequences of Satan's beguilement and leading humans astray, as well as the human's entrapment in Satan's deception and ensuing misguidance. It further signifies that such is the end for the hypocrites due to their deceptive promises to Banū al-Naḍīr and their subsequent betrayal, and for Banū al-Naḍīr in their folly of trusting these deceitful pledges and their stubborn defiance. The meaning of this verse is self-evident.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated by Ibn Isḥāq, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Abū Nuʿaym in *al-Dalā'il* from Ibn ʿAbbās that a faction from the Banū ʿAwf bin Al-Hārith, which included ʿAbdullāh bin Abī bin Salūl, Wadiʿah bin Mālik, Suwayd, and Daʿas, extended a pledge to Banū Nadīr: "Remain steadfast and resist, for we shall never forsake you. Should you face combat, we will engage alongside you; and should you leave, we shall accompany you." They anticipated this reinforcement, yet it was not forthcoming as God cast terror into their hearts. Consequently, they appealed to the Messenger of God for safe exodus and the sparing of their lives on the promise that he could have whatever their camels could carry of their possessions, excluding arms. The Prophet consented, whereupon a man among them would demolish his house, load it (that is, the possessions) onto a camel, and depart. They left for Khaybar, and some headed to the Levant.

Author's comment: This account differs from what is reported in various other traditions: initially, the Prophet offered them the option to depart taking with them whatever their camels could carry. They declined this offer at first but later agreed to it. However, by that time, the Prophet stipulated that they could only leave with themselves and their families, carrying nothing of their possessions. They complied, and upon their departure, the Prophet provided each trio among them with a camel and a water skin.

(2) In the same source, Ibn Mardūyah cites Ibn ʿAbbās regarding the verse "*Have you not regarded the hypocrites who say to their brethren*," referring to ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl, Rifāʿah b. Zayd, ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayl, and Aws b. Qayzī. The term "their brethren" refers to the Banū Nadīr.

Author's comment: The purpose here is to list certain individuals, which does not conflict with the details provided in the previous narration.

(3) In the same source, it is reported by Ibn Abī al-Dunya in *Makā'id al-Shayṭān*, by Ibn Mardūyah, and by Al-Bayhaqī in *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, on the authority of ʿUbayd b. Rafa'ah al-Dārimī. He relates from the Prophet, who narrated: There was a monk in the Children of Israel to whom Satan brought a strangled girl. Satan instilled in her family's hearts that her salvation lay with the monk. They approached the monk with her, and after much insistence, he relented and took her in. Satan began to whisper to him, making his actions seem fair, seducing him until he succumbed and lay with her. Upon the girl's conception, Satan persuaded the monk to murder her to avoid scandal, advising him to claim she had died if questioned. After he murdered her and buried the body, Satan sowed doubts in her family's hearts, leading them to confront the monk. When they did, he claimed she had passed away. They detained him, and Satan appeared to him saying, "It was I who troubled her family's hearts, and it was I who led you into this calamity. Obey me, and you shall be saved—prostrate to me twice." In doing so, he performed two prostrations to Satan. This is the individual referenced by God when He said: "*like Satan, when he prompts man to renounce faith, then, when he renounces faith*"; this is the verse in question.

Author's comment: The story is well-known and has been narrated in both abridged and detailed versions across many traditions.

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Verses 18-24

The verses in this section serve as a conclusion of the themes previously discussed in this chapter where it was pointed to the adversities caused by the Jewish tribe of Banū al-Naḍīr, their breaking of the covenant, and how this ultimately resulted in their worldly and otherworldly loss. The provocations by the hypocrites, urging them against God and His Messenger, spelled their doom. At the core of their downfall was their failure to be mindful of God in their actions; their forgetfulness of Him led to a self-forgetfulness, making them forsake what was in their best interest, both immediately and in the future, which led to their straying and destruction.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon those who have faith in God, His Messenger, and the Day of Judgement to be wary of their Lord, not to forget Him, and to scrutinize their actions which they send ahead in anticipation of the day they return to Him. Every action they take is (recorded and) preserved and will be subjected to God's judgement on that Day, leading to either reward or inevitable punishment.

This aim is encapsulated in the verse: "*O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow*," along with subsequent verses. These instructions guide the faithful to remember God, not to forget Him, and to reflect on their deeds. The quality of their actions will pivot the outcome of their eternal life. Believers must constantly monitor their actions to ensure they are pure and sincerely devoted to God's honorable countenance. They must self-assess, expressing gratitude to God for their good deeds, reproaching themselves for any misdeeds, and imploring for forgiveness.

Remembering God with due reverence to His majestic domain, through His Beautiful Names and Supreme Attributes presented by the Noble Qur'an, is the only path that culminates in the ultimate servitude—a zenith beyond which there is no greater perfection for humanity.

Indeed, human beings are but sheer servants and unequivocally belong to God. They are owned in every mandated aspect, devoid of any semblance of autonomy. Just as He is their Master in every decreed respect, entitled to autonomy on all fronts. The essence of perfection for anything lies in its inherent realization and its consequential effects. Thus, the true perfection of a human is to perceive oneself entirely owned by God, lacking any form of independence. This involves adopting the attributes of servitude, such as submissiveness, reverence, humility, acquiescence, and a recognition of one's own poverty in relation to the realm of majesty, honor, and self-sufficiency. Additionally, it is crucial that his actions and deeds align with what God decrees, not merely with

personal whims. This alignment should be consistent and without negligence at any stage of selfhood, traits, and conduct.

One cannot achieve a full understanding of his own essence, attributes, and actions, as seen through the lens of absolute dependency and complete servitude, except by turning inwards towards his Lord. This Lord is ever observant of all that exists and encompasses everything within His creation. He exercises authority over each soul according to what it has earned, never neglectful or forgetful of it. In this state, the heart finds solace, as God has said: "*Indeed, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace*" (13:28). It is through this remembrance that one truly knows God by His attributes of perfection, reflected in His most beautiful names. As a result, the human being manifests the traits of servanthood and acknowledges their own limitations through expressions of devotion, reverence, humility, and an innate sense of need and poverty.[1]

This realization leads to the performance of virtuous deeds, sustained by constant awareness and ongoing remembrance of God, as He instructs: "*And remember your Lord within your heart beseechingly and reverentially, without being loud, morning and evening, and do not be among the heedless. Indeed those who are near your Lord do not disdain to worship Him. They glorify Him and prostrate to Him*" (7:205-206). And He said, "*But if they disdain* (*the worship of Allah*)*, those who are near your Lord glorify Him night and day, and they are not wearied*" (41:38).

The verses also allude to the knowledge of God by His perfect attributes and the recognition of one's own self by the contrasting traits of insufficiency and need, as suggested within the context of the verses beginning with "*Had We sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain, you would have surely seen it humbled* (*and*) *go to pieces with the fear of Allah. We draw such comparisons for mankind, so that they may reflect*" and continuing to the end of those specific verses.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

(59:18) O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow, and be wary of Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do.

The verse consists of commands to the believers to be conscious of God and to introspect about their deeds prepared (or sent ahead) for the Day of Retribution. They should evaluate whether their actions are virtuous, in which

1 God's attributes of perfection is His essence from different perspective, for no one can comprehend His true essence. (Trans.)

case they may anticipate God's reward, or if they are corrupt, they should then fear His punishment and strive to make amends through repentance and turning to God. This entails self-accountability.

Concerning piety, which is elucidated in the hadith as abstinence from God's prohibitions, it encompasses all obligations and prohibitions. Piety, therefore, involves constant avoidance of neglecting the obligations and engaging in prohibitions.

Regarding the contemplation of what one has prepared for the coming day, this is a separate consideration beyond piety. The analogy is that of a worker or craftsman conducting a secondary, corrective review of their work to enhance it and address any lapses or mistakes initially overlooked.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon all believers to fear God in what He has commanded concerning their obligations, to obey Him and not to disobey. Subsequently, they should reflect on the deeds they have sent ahead, which will be the basis of their afterlife, once they are held accountable for them. If the deeds are virtuous, they can hope for divine reward; if they are corrupt, they should fear divine reprimand and turn towards repentance and seek God's forgiveness.

This obligation is general, extending to all believers because of the collective need to rectify actions and because individual contemplation cannot substitute for that of others. Nonetheless, those from the community of believers who fulfill this duty are exceedingly rare, bordering on non-existent—a fact suggested by the phrase "*and let every soul consider*."

Therefore, the clause "*and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow*" addresses all believers inclusively. Yet, the individuals who engage in such introspection are a mere handful within the broader faith community, even fewer among those who practice piety. This scarcity is largely due to their entanglement with worldly concerns and their full immersion in managing their sustenance and sorting their life's affairs. The verse intentionally uses a distant form of address and an indefinite term, stating "*every soul*," implying a gentle rebuke and admonishment for the believers and subtly alluding to the few who are suited to heed this call.

In the clause "*what it sends ahead for tomorrow*," there is a probing question about the essence of actions prepared for the future, clarifying the intended reflection. The "what" may serve as a relative pronoun, linking the subject matter to the act of reflection.

The term "*tomorrow*" metaphorically denotes the Day of Resurrection—a time for the reckoning of deeds. It is described as "*tomorrow*" to signify its imminent arrival, similar to the closeness of one day to the next. This is echoed in the

divine assertion, "*Indeed they see it to be far off, and We see it to be near*" (70:7).

Thus, the verse conveys: "O you who have believed, be mindful of God through adherence to His commands and avoidance of His prohibitions. Let each soul among you examine their actions, assessing what they have prepared for the Day of Reckoning. Are these actions virtuous or otherwise? And they should contemplate whether their righteous deeds are indeed meritorious and accepted or not."

In the ending phrase, "*and be wary of Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do*," there is a reiterated command for piety, and the subsequent clause "*Allah is indeed well aware*" serves as a justification for this command. This rationale indicates that the piety referred to here pertains to self-accountability and introspection to ensure deeds are reformed and dedicated sincerely to God and to safeguard them from anything that could corrupt their purity. In contrast, the phrase "*be wary Allah*" at the beginning of the verse emphasizes the importance of foundational piety—performing righteous acts, restricting oneself to acts of obedience, and avoiding transgressions.

Thus, it is evident that the concept of *taqwa* (piety) is distinct in the two contexts. The first refers to *taqwa* in the initial performance of actions, while the second refers to *taqwa* concerning actions already performed, focusing on their amendment and devotion. Furthermore, the views suggesting that the first instance calls for repentance from past sins and the second for avoiding future sins do not hold. The same applies to the views that the first relates to fulfilling duties and the second to forsaking prohibitions, as well as the notion that the second instance simply reinforces the first command—these views are deemed inaccurate.

وَلا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنسَاهُمْ أَنفُسَهُمْ أُوْلَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

(5:19) And do not be like those who forget Allah, so He makes them forget their own souls. It is they who are the transgressors.

'Forgetting' signifies the fading of the known from one's consciousness after having been present, along with the disappearance of its inducing cause. This term is also expansively applied to any disregard of something without considering its effects. The Almighty states, "*And it will be said, 'Today We will forget you, just as you forgot the encounter of this day of yours. The fire will be your abode, and you will not have any helpers*'" (45:34).

This verse essentially reinforces the message of the preceding one, implying: "Prepare for the Day of Judgment and Retribution, with righteous deeds that will enliven your souls and do not neglect them."

Forgetting oneself stems from forgetting God, because in forgetting Him,

His beautiful names and sublime attributes are overlooked—attributes to which human inherent traits like humility, poverty, and neediness are tied. By neglecting God, a person may delude themselves into thinking they exist independently, possessing life, power, knowledge, and all perceived aspects of perfection autonomously. In this illusion, one might see themselves on par with apparent cosmic forces, believing in their influence and impact.

Thus, such a person may depend on their own self when reliance should be on the Lord; they may place hope and fear in apparent causes instead of in God; and they might seek peace in what is not their Lord when it is upon the Lord they should find peace.

In essence, when individuals forget their Lord and no longer seek to turn towards Him, choosing instead to turn towards others, they inadvertently forget their own selves. The mistaken notion that one is an autonomous entity, endowed with the ultimate perfections of existence and mastery over their life's affairs as a result of apparent causes, does not reflect humanity's true essence. Humans, in their inherent state, are beings of contingency—wholly ignorant, utterly incapable, inherently humble, deeply needy, and dependent. The qualities that seem to be within a person's possession, such as life, wisdom, strength, dignity, prosperity, and similar attributes, are in truth ascribed to and find their ultimate direction towards the Lord. It is to Him that all must return, mirroring the way all cosmic causes find their purpose and culmination.

The conclusion is that, since forgetting oneself stems from forgetting God the Exalted, the verse shifts from warning against self-forgetfulness to cautioning against forgetting Him. This shift underscores the idea that an effect dissipates with the loss of its cause, conveying a more potent and assertive message. The verse doesn't content itself with a broad admonition to not forget God by saying "*do not be like those who forget Allah, so He makes them forget their own souls*." Instead, it presents the warning through a poignant example, making it more influential and acceptable. It exhorts them not to emulate those who forgot God, alluding to the Jews of Banū al-Naḍīr and Banu Qaynuqā' and others whose conduct is synonymous with theirs in defying God and His Messenger.[1]

The verse states, "*And do not be like those who forget Allah*," subsequently elaborating, "*so He makes them forget their own souls*," linking the consequence (or effect) directly to its cause. It concludes with, "*It is they who are the transgressors*," thereby affirming that such individuals are truly transgressors, having strayed from the path of servitude.

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1 In other words, the verse intentionally directs the warning from forgetting oneself to forgetting God, emphasizing that neglecting the divine leads to losing one's sense of self, as our identity is deeply rooted in that connection. (Trans.)

While the verse explicitly warns against forgetting God—a forgetfulness that extends to oneself—its placement after the previous verse implies a directive to remember God and being mindful of His presence.

From the discussion of the two verses (59:18-19), it is evident that the first verse enjoins the self-accountability, whereas the second stresses the importance of remembrance and awareness.

لا يَسْتَوِي أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ وَأَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ﴿٢٠﴾

(59:20) Not equal are the inmates of the Fire and the inhabitants of paradise. It is the inhabitants of paradise who are the successful ones.

Al-Raghib said: "Success" (*al-fawz*) is the attainment of good with the assurance of security (*al-ẓafr bi'l-khayr ma'a ḥuṣūl al-salāmah*).

The context of the verse reveals that '*inhabitants of the Fire*' refers to those who forget God, whereas '*inhabitants of paradise*' refers to those who remember God and are mindful of Him.

This verse serves as definitive evidence that individuals are obligated to align themselves with those who remember and are mindful of God, rather than with those who are forgetful of Him. It clarifies that humanity is divided into two distinct groups and no room for third: those who remember God and those who forget God. Everyone must choose a side, as the two are not on equal footing. It isn't a matter of indifference which group one joins; there is a clear preference. One must choose the superior path, which is that of those who remember God, for they are the ones who achieve success. Thus, the choice for every soul is to affiliate with those who actively remember God.

لَوْ أَنزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

(59:21) Had We sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain, you would have surely seen it humbled (and) go to pieces with the fear of Allah. We draw such comparisons for mankind, so that they may reflect.

Majma' al-bayaan states that: *al-taṣaddu* (splitting apart or "go to pieces") refers to coming apart after being joined, akin to *al-tafaṭṭur* (shattering).

And the (divine) speech is presented in the manner of a similitude, constructed on imaginative illustration, and the evidence for this is His statement at the end of the verse: "*We draw such comparisons for mankind, so that they may reflect*."

The intended purpose (of this similitude) is to emphasize the grandeur of the Qur'an, which is filled with profound knowledge, fundamental principles

of the divine law, moral lessons, exhortations, and warnings; indeed, it is the magnificent speech of God. The meaning conveyed is: If a mountain, with its sheer solidity, hardness, immense size, and capacity to endure (calamities), were in a capacity to have the Qur'an revealed upon it and we allowed it, you would observe the mountain deeply affected, splitting apart (into pieces) from the awe of God. Thus, if a mountain, in its steadfastness, is so profoundly moved, then humans should be even more inclined to humility and reverence when they recite the Qur'an or hear it recited. It is truly astonishing to witness those who persist in defiance and opposition remain unyielding, their hearts untouched, lacking both humility and fear before God.

The transition from direct address to the third person in the phrase "*with the fear of Allah*" is meant to point to the cause of the described effect: the mountain only crumbles and splits asunder because the Qur'an that is revealed upon it is the word of God, majestic is His name.

Furthermore, the (concluding) statement "*We draw such comparisons for mankind, so that they may reflect*" illustrates the use of a general principle to underscore a particular instance, highlighting that this decree is not an isolated occurrence; rather, it applies across various other contexts.[1]

So the statement "*Had We sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain*" serves as a similitude from God to mankind, illustrating the magnitude and majesty of the Qur'an as it is the word of Almighty God and contains profound knowledge. This similitude is given in the hope that people will reflect upon the Qur'an, appropriately engage with its teachings, comprehend its evident truths, and follow the guidance it offers toward the path of servitude. This path is the only one leading to their ultimate fulfillment and happiness, as alluded to in the preceding verses regarding awareness (*al-muraqabah*) and self-accountability (*al-muhasabah*).

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِى لا إِلَهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٢٢﴾

(59:22) He is Allah—there is no god except Him—Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, He is the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.

This verse, along with the subsequent two, enumerates some of His Beautiful Names and point to His attributes by every beautiful name. They affirm His transcendence as acknowledged by all creation in the heavens and on earth. Moreover, these verses continue the preceding discourse on remembrance, suggesting that the mindful should remember (and invoke) Him by His

1 This is intended to convey that the lesson extends beyond the specific example, encouraging reflection and contemplation among the people. (Trans.)

Beautiful Names and understand their own imperfections in the light of His perfection (and beautiful names). This needs to be comprehended.

Furthermore, when these verses are considered in connection with the preceding one, especially the phrase "*with the fear of Allah*," they provide the rationale for the mountain's awe and splitting into pieces due to the fear of God, as if to say: And how could it not be so, for He is God, there is no deity but He, the Knower of the unseen and the seen, as conveyed to the end of the verses.

The phrase "*He is Allah—there is no god except Him*" explicitly highlights His unique name that embodies His Oneness in Divinity and the fact that He alone is deserving of worship. This concept of Divine Oneness has been elaborated upon earlier in the exegesis of the verse, "*And your God is One God, there is no god but He*" (2:163).

The phrase "*Knower of the sensible and the Unseen*" delineates two forms of reality: 'the sensible' (or "the witnessed") is that which is apparent and accessible to perception, and 'the Unseen' is everything beyond such perception. These concepts are inherently relational—what may be witnessed for one might be unseen to another, dependent on the means of comprehension, be it sensory, imaginative, intellectual, or existential. And all that exists, whether within the realm of the unseen or the witnessed, is fully within God's encompassing knowledge. He is the ultimate Knower of both domains. Others cannot grasp the unseen due to their existential limitations and their inability to perceive beyond their capacity, except for what God chooses to reveal, as stated: "*Knower of the unseen, He does not disclose His unseen to anyone except to a messenger He approves of*" (Al-Jinn: 26-27). In contrast to all creation, God is unseen in the most absolute sense; His essence is beyond the reach of any creature's understanding, as affirmed: "*But they cannot comprehend Him in their knowledge*" (20:110).

Regarding the phrase, "*He is the All-beneficent, the All-merciful*," an in-depth analysis of these two names has already been provided in the interpretation of Sūrah Al-Fatiha.

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِی لا إِلَهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(59:23) He is Allah—there is no god except Him— the Sovereign, the All-holy, the All-benign, the Securer, the All-conserver, the All-mighty, the All-compeller, the All-magnanimous. Clear is Allah of any partners that they may ascribe (to Him)!

The "Sovereign" refers to the one who controls and governs the affairs of people. The "All-holy" is an amplification of sanctity, indicating transcendence and purity. The "All-benign" (or the Source of Peace) is the one who greets you

with peace and safety, free from any harm.

The "Securer" provides assurance and security, while the "All-conserver" signifies supreme control and dominance over all matters.

The "All-mighty" is the overpowering one who cannot be overpowered or the one possessing what no others have, in a non-reciprocal manner. The "All-compeller" is one who repairs what is broken, or whose will prevails and compels according to His wishes. The "All-magnanimous" embodies greatness and manifests it prominently.

Furthermore, the phrase, "*Clear is Allah of any partners that they may ascribe* (*to Him*)," extols the Almighty, akin to the verse, "*And they say, 'Allah has taken a son.' Immaculate is He!*" found in 2:116.

هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الأَسْمَاء الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٤﴾

(59:24) He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Former. To Him belong the Best Names. Whatever there is in the heavens glorifies Him and (whatever there is in) the earth, and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.

The Creator is He who brings entities into creation with measure. The Originator initiates forth creations, distinguishing some from others, while the Fashioner bestows upon them distinct forms, enabling differentiation. These three appellations collectively imply the act of creation, yet with diverse perspectives and an inherent sequence; the act of fashioning stems from originating, which in turn stems from creating, and this is evident.

The two verses that precede are introduced with "*He is Allah—there is no god except Him*," thus describing "*Allah*" and followed by enumerating His names, in contrast to this verse that commences with "*He is Allah, the Creator*," and so forth.

This distinction is made because the venerable names cited in the preceding verses—eleven in total—are essential attributes of Lordship and the sovereign management of all affairs. These are the foundations from which the concepts of divinity and the true entitlement to worship emerge. These attributes are intrinsically and independently applicable only to God, the Sublime, who has no partner in these aspects. Hence, the sole attribution of these qualities to His Exalted Self signifies the uniqueness of His divinity and validates the propriety of His being worshipped.

Thus, the noble names serve as the rationale for the exclusivity of His divinity, suggesting that there is no god but Him precisely because He is the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Hence,

for this reason, the divine names is aptly capped with His praise: "Clear is God of any partners that they may ascribe (to Him)!," challenging the idolaters' claim of associating partners with Him.

Regarding the statement, "*He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Former*," the names specified therein pertain to the act of creation and bringing into existence. However, the mere act of creation, although ascribed to Him, doesn't solely confer upon Him the exclusivity of divinity. This is demonstrated by the practice of polytheists who recognize His sole authority over creation and existence, yet paradoxically worship other gods and attribute partners to Him.

The placement of the Divine Name (*Allah*) at the start of each of the three verses (59:22-24) signifies that it is a marker for the Divine Essence, a confluence of all attributes of perfection, upon which all names are predicated and applied. The repetition reinforces and strengthens the point being made.

Furthermore, the phrase "*To Him belong the best names*" points to the entirety of the beautiful names not yet specified, for the word "names" is presented in the plural form accompanied by "the" (*al-*), indicating completeness and universality.

The phrase "*Whatever there is in the heavens glorifies Him and* (*whatever there is in*) *the earth*" encompasses all created entities within the universe, extending even to the heavens and the earth themselves, a concept that has been repeatedly clarified.

The verse concludes with the proclamation "*and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise*," affirming that God is the overpowering one who cannot be subdued, executing His action with precision and without recklessness. No act of disobedience or defiance can thwart His divine legislation and guidance, nor will the obedience of the faithful go unappreciated or unrewarded by Him.

Attention is drawn to the deliberate conclusion of the discourse with the two attributes, underscoring that the Qur'an, revealed by Him, is a speech of the Mighty and the Wise. This revelation prompts the frequent invocation of His name, the Mighty, particularly in conjunction with the Wise, even though it has been mentioned earlier among other names.

Moreover, the Qur'an itself is characterized by these attributes of might and wisdom, as exemplified by the verses: "*Indeed, it is a mighty book*" (41:2), and "*And the Wise Qur'an*" (36:2).

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Majmaʿ*, regarding the saying of the Exalted, "*Knower of the sensible and the Unseen*": Abu Jaʿfar said: Al-Ghayb is that which has not occurred and *al-shahādah* is that which has already occurred.

Author's comment: This is an explanation through some instances. We

have cited narrations from them concerning the meaning of the name of Majesty and the two names, al-Raḥmān and al-Raḥīm, at the end of the exegesis of al-Basmala from Sūrah al-Fātiḥah.

(2) And in *al-Tawḥīd*, with its chain of transmission from Abu Basīr about Abu Jaʿfar in a narration: He has always been living without life and a capable sovereign before He created anything, and a compelling king after He created the universe.

Author's comment: His saying: He has always been living without life, means without a life that is additional to the Essence. And his statement: He has always been a capable sovereign before He created anything, refers the sovereignty, which is from the attributes of action, back to power, which is from the attributes of the essence, to affirm its existence before creation.

(3) And in *Al-Kāfī*, with its chain of transmission from Hishām al-Jawāliqī who said: I asked Abu ʿAbdullāh about the words of God: "*Subḥān Allāh*" what does it mean? He said: It means glorification.

(4) And in *Nahj al-Balāghah* we read: The Creator is not in the sense of motion or fatigue.

Author's comment: We have cited several narrations about the Beautiful Names and their enumeration in the discussion of the Beautiful Names in the eighth part of the book.

(5) And in the famous Prophetic tradition: Hold yourselves accountable before you are held accountable, and weigh your deeds before they are weighed for you, and prepare for the greatest purpose.

(6) And in *Al-Kāfī*, with its chain to Abī al-Ḥasan: One is not of us who does not hold themselves accountable every day; if they do good, they should increase in gratitude to God, and if they do bad, they should seek forgiveness from God and repent to Him.

Author's comment: There are other narrations close to this meaning. We have cited narrations about the meaning of the remembrance of God following the exegesis of God's words: "*Fadhkurūnī adhkurkum*" (So remember Me; I will remember you), Al-Baqarahh: 152, and His saying: "*Yā ayyuhā alladhīna āmanū dhkurū Allāh dhikrān kathīrān*" (O you who have believed, remember God with much remembrance), 33: 21. So, let whoever wishes refer to it.

End of Chapter 59

Chapter 60

Sūrah Al-Mumtaḥana (The Woman who is Examined)

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بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Introduction

This chapter recollects the friendship of (some of) the believers (in Medina) with the enemies of God from among the stubborn disbelievers (in Mecca). It accentuates the prohibition of such an attitude. The chapter begins with this theme and terminates with it too. It also contains some rules regarding women who migrate (to Medina), and rules regarding the pledge of allegiance of believing women. Thus the chapter's Medinan provenance is patently manifest.

Verses 1-9

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يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ تُلْقُونَ إِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِمَا جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ يُخْرِجُونَ الرَّسُولَ وَإِيَّاكُمْ ۙ أَنْ تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ رَبِّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ خَرَجْتُمْ جِهَادًا فِي سَبِيلِي وَابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِي ۚ تُسِرُّونَ إِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ بِمَا أَخْفَيْتُمْ وَمَا أَعْلَنْتُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْهُ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿١﴾

(60:1) O you who believe, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies/friends offering them friendship while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth, driving out the Messenger and yourselves simply because you believe in Allah your Lord—not if you emigrated in order to strive in My service and to seek My pleasure. You secretly confide to them friendship but I am most knowing of what you conceal and what you declare. And whoever does it among you then certainly he has lost the straight path.

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The content of these verses indicates that some of the believers from the emigrants (*al-muhājirūn*) were secretly confiding friendship to the polytheists in Mecca. This was so that they may protect by it those of their relatives and children who had remained behind in Mecca after they themselves had left it by emigrating to Medina. Consequently, these verses were revealed where God

prohibits them from that. What is historically related corroborates this meaning, which is that these verses were revealed in respect of Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'a. He secretly conveyed a letter to the polytheists in Mecca, informing them in it of the Messenger of God's resolve to march forth to Mecca in order to conquer it and free it from their control. Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'a did that so that it could serve as leverage for him against the polytheists in his quest to protect his relatives and children who were in Mecca. So God informed His Prophet of it, and these verses were revealed. You shall be presented with the relevant anecdote in the forthcoming section titled 'Examining Narrations' God-willing.

The meaning of the word *'aduww* that occurs in the beginning part of this verse which reads *'O you who believe, do not take My enemies* ('aduwwī) *and your enemies* ('aduwwakum) *as allies/friends...*' is well-known. It is applied to the singular (enemy) as well as to the plural (enemies) while its meaning in this verse is that of the plural due to contextual evidence. The relevant contextual evidence in this case is the occurrence of plural words and pronouns such as *awliyā'* (allies/friends), *ilayhim* (to them), and others in this verse. The reference of the word *'aduww* in this verse is to the Meccan polytheists. They were God's enemies because they had taken partners for Him whom they worshipped while they did not worship God, in addition to which they rejected His call and belied His Messenger. They were the believer's enemies too and this was because of the believer's faith in God and their sacrifice of their wealth and selves in God's service. Thus whoever was hostile and inimical to God was consequently hostile and inimical to the believers too.

This verse mentions the Meccan polytheists' enmity with the believers when (it could be argued) mentioning their enmity with God was sufficient in the context of forbidding taking them as allies. And yet the verse mentions their enmity with God *and* with the believers. This leads to the question: why does it do that? And the answer is that it does so in order to emphasize a warning and to reiterate forbiddance just as when it is said: 'whoever is God's enemy is your enemy too, so do not take him as your ally/friend'.[1]

The meaning of 'offering friendship' is to manifest it or to convey it, while

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1 The clause, *...offering them friendship...* occurs in Arabic as *tulqūna* (you offer) *ilayhim* (to them) *bi al-mawaddati* (friendship). The prepositional construction *bi al-mawaddati* (consisting of the preposition *bi* [*ḥarf jarr*] and the noun governed by it in the genitive case *al-mawaddati* [*majrūr*]) occurs as the grammatical object (*al-maf'ūl*) of the masculine second person plural present tense verb *tulqūna* (you offer) while the preposition *bi* is identified as *bā zā'idatun li al-ta'kīd*—the redundant particle *bā* of emphasis. This is similar to (2:195) which reads in Arabic as *wa lā tulqū* (and do not cast) *bi aydīkum* ((with) your (own) hands) *ila al-tahlukati* (to [your own] destruction). (Auth.)

this part of the verse occurs here either adjectivally (*ṣifa*) or as describing the state, condition or circumstance (*ḥāl*) of the grammatical subject of the masculine second person plural present tense verb (in the jussive) (*lā*) *tattakhidhū* ((do not) take (which is a reference to the Medinan believers) at the moment when the action of this verb takes place).

The part of this verse which says *...while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth...* refers to the true religion which the book of God describes and to which the Prophet calls. This part of the verse occurs as a circumstantial clause (*jumlatun ḥāliyya*) (describing the state, condition or circumstance of the grammatical object of the masculine second person plural present tense verb (in the jussive) (*lā*) *tattakhidhū,* which is God's and the believer's enemies (that is, the Meccan polytheists) at the moment when the action of this verb takes place).

The part of this verse which reads *...driving out the Messenger and yourselves simply because you believe in Allah your Lord...* is a circumstantial clause (*jumlatun ḥāliyya*) (describing the state, condition or circumstance of the grammatical subject of the masculine third person plural past tense verb *kafarū* (they have disbelieved), which is a reference to God's and the believer's enemies (that is, the Meccan polytheists)). The meaning of 'driving out the Messenger and yourselves' is to compel the Messenger and the believers to leave Mecca and emigrate to Medina. The phrase *an tu'minū billāhi rabbikum* has the letter *lām* implicit to it (*li-an tu'minū billāhi rabbikum*), related to the masculine third person plural present tense verb *yukhrijūna* (they drive out), and the meaning is: 'they compel the Messenger and yourselves to emigrate from Mecca—*li īmānikum billāhi rabbikum*—because of your faith in God your Lord'. The description of God here as *rabbikum*—your Lord—is in order to indicate that the Meccan polytheists were persecuting the believers for a matter that was true and obligatory for the latter, and not for a crime, since a person's faith in his Lord is obligatory on him and not a crime.

The part of this verse which reads *...not if you emigrated in order to strive in My service and to seek My pleasure...* relates to *O you who believe, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies/friends offering them friendship...* The apodosis of this conditional sentence is elided because the part of the verse to which it relates indicates and clarifies it. This is while the word *jihādan* (to strive) is a verbal noun and identified as being *maf'ūlu lahu* and (similarly so is) the word *ibtighā'* (which) means 'to demand'. This is while the word *al-marḍāh* (pleasure) is a verbal noun akin to *al-riḍā.* Consequently, the meaning obtained is: 'do not take my enemy and your enemy as friends *if* you have emigrated for the sake of striving in My service and in order to seek My pleasure'.

Rendering the prohibition to take God's and the believer's enemies as

friends conditional to their emigration in God's service and to seek His pleasure is from the perspective of making an instruction (that is, the prohibition) conditional to a realized matter (that is, the emigration, which had already taken place), and in the spirit of stress and emphasis in respect of it, and to indicate an association between the condition and the instruction similar to the instruction of a parent to the child when the parent says: 'if you are my child... (the realized matter and the condition) ...then do not do such and such' (the instruction, which is rendered conditional to the mentioned condition).

You secretly confide to them (tusirrūna ilayhim) *friendship* (bi al-mawaddat) *but I am most knowing of what you conceal and what you declare*: It is said in Arabic *asrartu ilayhi ḥadīthan* which means 'I secretly revealed (or disclosed in confidence) to him a story/piece of conversation'. Thus the meaning of this part of the verse *You secretly confide to them* (*tusirrūna ilayhim*) *friendship* (*bi al-mawaddat*) is that you (secretly) apprise them of what you conceal (in your hearts) of friendship—as opined by al-Rāghib—while the word *al-iʿlān* (to declare) is the contrary of the word *al-ikhfā'* (to conceal). This is while the part of this verse that says ...*but* (*or while*) *I am most knowing of what you conceal and what you declare* occurs as describing the state, condition or circumstance (*al-ḥāl*) of the grammatical subject of the masculine second person plural present tense verb *tusirrūna* (you secretly confide), which are the believers, at the moment when the action of this verb takes place). The word *aʿlamu* (I am most knowing) that occurs in this verse is a superlative noun (*ism tafḍīl*), however some Qur'an commentators have opined that the word *aʿlamu* here is the first person singular present tense verb (*aʿlamu*—I know) rather than a superlative noun (*aʿlamu*—I am most knowing), rendered transitive by the particle *bi,* and this is because the word *al-ʿilm* may perhaps be rendered transitive by this particle.

The sentence, ...*You secretly confide to them friendship but I am most knowing of what you conceal and what you declare* occurs as an explanatory resumption of the narrative. This is just as if (the concerned Medinan Muslims) said (feigning ignorance), after having heard the immediately preceding prohibition, 'what have we done?' And the retort made would be: 'you secretly inform them (that is, the Meccan polytheists) of your friendship for them while I (your Lord, God) am most knowing of what you conceal and what you declare', meaning: 'I am most aware of your speech and deeds; an awareness and knowledge that makes your concealment and manifestation equal to Me'.

It also becomes clear from here that this part of the verse, which mentions two things (concealing and declaring), and reads ...*what you conceal and what you declare...,* has these two things have the same meaning, which is that the

acts of concealment and manifestation near God are one and the same due to His encompassing what is apparent and what is hidden. Thus it should not be countered that the mention of *...what you conceal* suffices from the mention of *...and what you declare* on the basis of the argument that the one who knows what is hidden is obviously all the more knowing of what is manifest (since the phrase what you conceal and the phrase what you declare together have the same meaning).

The end of this verse which reads *And whoever does it among you then certainly he has lost the straight path* serves as an indication of (some of) the (Medinan) Muslim's concealing of friendship for the polytheists, which was in the form of support for them. The phrase *sawā'a al-sabīl* consists of appending the adjective (*sawā'a* (straight)) to the noun (*al-sabīl* (path)) (in the form of a possessive constructive) meaning thereby *al-sabīl al-sawiyy* and *al-ṭarīq al-mustaqīm* (the straight path), and this phrase serves as the grammatical object (*al-maf'ūl*) of the verb *ḍalla* (which is the reason the noun *sawā'a* has the accusative case ending (*al-manṣūb*)). Or, the noun *sawā'a* has the accusative case ending (*al-manṣūb*) due to the suppression of the preposition *'an* (before it, which would have rendered the accusative noun *sawā'a* with a genitive case ending (*majrūr*)), the implication being *fa qad ḍalla 'an sawā'i al-sabīl*—then certainly he has strayed *from* (*'an*) the straight path—and this path is the path of God (*sabīl allāh*)

إِنْ يَثْقَفُوكُمْ يَكُونُوا لَكُمْ أَعْدَاءً وَيَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَأَلْسِنَتَهُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَوَدُّوا لَوْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٢﴾

(60:2) If they gain dominance over you they will be your enemies and extend their hands and tongues against you for evil, and they will like it if you disbelieve.

Al-Rāghib says: The word *al-thaqf*—with a *fatḥa* on the letter *tha* and a *sukūn* on the letter *qāf*—means: "perceiving or diagnosing and doing, accomplishing or achieving something with skill, dexterity, and cleverness." He also says: 'If you perceived or diagnosed something by means of your sight due to dexterity and skill in vision or expertness in vision, then let it pass, it is (still) said *thaqafta kadhā* (you adroitly perceived such and such). Thus the word is used in respect of perception and diagnosis even if perception and diagnosis are not coupled with accomplishment and achievement of what is perceived and diagnosed'.

This is while others have explained this word to mean 'victory and triumph', and perhaps this meaning for this word in this verse is in light of contextual suitability. Nevertheless, both meanings are close to each other.

This verse is in the context of clarifying (to the concerned Medinan Muslims) that secretly confiding friendship to the polytheists would not benefit them at all in winning their friendship and support and removing their enmity, and that the polytheists would continue to be their enemies without any change of heart were they to overtake and triumph over them, despite them (that is, some of the Muslims) offering them friendship.

The part of this verse which reads *...and extend their hands and tongues against you for evil, and they will like it if you disbelieve* serves as an explanation for the part *...they will be your enemies....,* to which it is conjoined. This is while the 'extension of hands for evil' means murder and captivity and all kinds of persecution and torture while 'extension of tongues for evil' means curses, insults, revilement, and abuse.

It is clear that the clause *...and they will like it if you disbelieve...* is directly connected to the outcome *...they will be your enemies...* (the outcome being dependent on the condition *If they gain dominance over you...*). The verb *waddū* (translated as 'they liked/desired') is used here with a future tense implication ('they will like'), which is typical in a conditional sentence comprising both a condition and a resulting action. Thus the meaning obtained is that: "they will reach out to harm you with their hands and slander you with their tongues, hoping to see you reject faith. This behavior is similar to how they previously tortured and persecuted the believers in Mecca, inflicting punishment with the intention of making them forsake their religion." And God knows best.

لَنْ تَنْفَعَكُمْ أَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ ۚ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٣﴾

(60:3) Never will your relatives or your children benefit you on the day of resurrection. He will separate you, and Allah sees well all that you do.

The beginning part of the verse occurs as a rebuttal to what perhaps may be imagined or construed (by those Medinan Muslims) as an excuse for offering friendship to the Meccan polytheists. This potential excuse would be that such an attitude would protect their relatives and children from the persecution of the polytheists; relatives and children whom they had left behind in Mecca in the midst of the polytheists.

Thus the rebuttal (in this verse) is: "ahead of you is a day in which you shall be held accountable for your sins and evil deeds and shall be recompensed for them, among which is friendship with the disbelievers. On that day, your relatives and children shall not benefit you; those whose protection from the polytheist's persecution you had given preference to over the protection of

your own souls from God's punishment; a protection which would have been earned by letting go of the friendship of the disbelievers."

The clause, *He will separate you...* means that God shall separate you on the day of resurrection by sundering the worldly causes (that bind you) as He says *So when the trumpet is blown, there shall be no ties of kinship between them...* (23:101). This is because 'kinship', which involves two people or more tracing their origin to one womb, has its effects influenced and impacted by mercy, love, kindness, the spirit of aiding and supporting each other, tribal affinity, service, and other such effects in the context of social life. The human being's need for social relations and social life drives him to it naturally, on the basis of considered opinions and beliefs, which his social understanding has created in him. This is while there is no information regarding these opinions outside of the context or circumstance of social life.

Thus when the realities come to the fore, and the veils are lifted on the day of resurrection, these opinions and claims shall fall away from the human being and the independent associations between causes and effects shall be sundered as God says *...certainly the ties between you are now cut off and what you asserted is gone from you...*(6:94) and as He says *...and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder* (2:166).

Thus on that day, kinship ties shall be sundered and the one possessing kinship will not be able to benefit at all due to his kinship. Therefore it does not behove a person to betray God and His Messenger by being friendly with enemies of the faith for the sake of his kinsmen and children for the latter shall not be able to save him from God's retribution that day.

It is also suggested that the meaning of the statement *...He will separate you...* is that God will separate you on the day of resurrection due to what that day holds of horrors, which would cause everyone to flee from each other; an understanding based on the following verse *The day on which a man shall flee from his brother, and from his mother and father, and from his spouse and son. Everyone on that day shall have an affair that shall occupy him!* (80:34-37). However, the previous interpretation is best in light of the context.

It is also suggested that the meaning (of *...He will separate you...*) is that God shall distinguish some from the others on that day, making the faithful and obedient to enter paradise and the unfaithful and sinful to hell (thereby separating them). Consequently, a believing relative in paradise will not see his disbelieving relative in hell. Although this interpretation is not invalid in and of itself, it is unsuitable contextually, since there is no evidence here for the disbelief of the relatives and children.

It is also said that the separation mentioned is the separation caused due

to judgment, and therefore the meaning is: 'God shall judge between you on the day of resurrection.' However this interpretation also suffers from the same problem as the previous interpretation, which is that of contextual unsuitability. This is because the separation caused by judgment would be appropriate if there existed differences (between the relatives in Medina and those in Mecca) such as in the following verse *Surely your Lord will judge between them on the day of resurrection concerning that wherein they differ* (32:25). However, this verse under consideration manifests no such relevance.

The ending statement *...and Allah sees well all that you do* occurs as a completion to the beginning part of this verse *Never will your relatives or your children benefit you...* as if affirming it, and thus the meaning obtained is: 'your relatives and children shall never benefit you on the day of resurrection in saving you from the effects of this treachery and its like, and God sees well all that you do. Nothing of this treachery is hidden from Him and He will undoubtedly take you to task for it'.

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَآءُ مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَالْبَغْضَاءُ أَبَدًا حَتَّىٰ تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحْدَهُ إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَا أَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۖ رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنَبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٤﴾

(60:4) Indeed, there is for you a good example in Abraham and those with him when they said to their people 'indeed, we dissociate from you and from what you worship besides Allah. We have rejected you, and there has appeared between us and you enmity and hatred forever, until you believe in Allah alone'. This is except for the speech of Abraham to his father 'I shall certainly ask forgiveness for you, however I do not own anything for you from Allah. Our Lord, we place our trust on You, and to You we turn, and to You is the final return'.

This and the next verse address the believers. The word *uswa,* which occurs in this verse, means 'to follow, to adhere, to emulate and imitate' while the part of this verse that says *...and those with him...* indicates, on the basis of its apparent connotation, that there were with Abraham, believing individuals in addition to his wife and the Prophet Lot.

The sentence, *...when they said to their people 'indeed, we dissociate from you and from what you worship besides Allah...'* means 'we are innocent and free of any association with you and your idols'. This occurs as a proclamation clarifying the rejection of what associating with the polytheists and their idols would imply, which is the implication of belief in myths and legends (*viz-a-viz*

idols and idol worship) and the implication of following and emulating them (that is, the polytheists in their polytheism).

The next statement *...We have rejected you, and there has appeared between us and you enmity and hatred forever, until you believe in Allah alone* clarifies the meaning of *al-barā'a* (dissociation) by means of its effects, which is rejection and denial of them (*al-kufr*), and enmity with them (*al-'adāwa*) as long as they remained polytheists, until they became monotheists, bringing faith in the one true God.

The intent of 'rejecting them' (*...We have rejected you...*) is to reject their polytheism, the intent of which is understood on the basis of what is expressed and exemplified by the believers' speech *...until you believe in Allah alone*, while rejecting their polytheism is to oppose them in their practice of it, practically and in deed, just as 'enmity and hatred' *...and there has appeared between us and you enmity and hatred forever* means separation and disunion from them, and opposition to them by means of the heart.

Thus the believers manifested their dissociation from the polytheists by three means: (a) opposing them in deed for their polytheism, (b) hating and being inimical to them in their hearts, and (c) resolving to continue all that as long as the polytheists remained polytheistic till they became monotheists, believing in one God.

The sentence, *This is except for the speech of Abraham to his father 'I shall certainly ask forgiveness for you, however I do not own anything for you from Allah...*' is an exception (*al-istithnā*) to what the preceding part of this verse denotes (which preceding part is known as the general statement or the generality (*al-mustathnā minhu*)). This is that Abraham and those with him dissociated from their polytheistic people; stating that in absolute terms, and that they had sundered all relations that bound them to their people, and connected them together, except for what Abraham said to his father, which was *'I shall certainly ask forgiveness for you, however I do not own anything for you from Allah....'*

However, this speech of Abraham was not due to him turning himself towards his father (in friendship) but rather due to a promise that he had made him specifically, hoping that he would turn away from polytheism and believe in the One, True God. This is evidenced from the following speech of God *And Abraham asking forgiveness for his father was only due to a promise he had made him; but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he dissociated himself from him; most surely Abraham was very tender-hearted, forbearing* (9:114). This signifies that Abraham had promised his father (that he would seek forgiveness for him from God) at a time when it had not yet become apparent to him that his father was an enemy of God, steeped in his enmity of

God, and established in his polytheism. This is while he used to hope that his father would turn away from polytheism, and he used to wish and desire that his father would turn penitent and believe. However, when his father's deeply entrenched enmity became clear to him, he despaired of his faith, and dissociated from him.

This is while the verse which describes his contentious debate with his father in Sūrah Maryam reads as follows *He said: Peace be on you, I will seek forgiveness for you from my Lord; surely He is ever Affectionate to me: And I will withdraw from you all and what you all call on besides Allah....* (19:47-48) It includes his promise to his father in favor of seeking forgiveness for him from God as well as his informing him of his withdrawal from him. If his promise to his father to seek forgiveness for him from God was from the perspective of turning towards him in friendship then it would have been more fitting and suitable for him to say 'and I withdraw from the people' and not that he should say (as he does in fact) 'I withdraw from you all', thereby including his father among those whom he withdrew from. And withdrawal (*al-i'tizāl*) is nothing but dissociation (*al-tabarrī*).

Thus, the exception in this verse is a connected one (*istithnā muttaṣil*) in that the believers did not address their people except by dissociation. Consequently, the meaning obtained is: 'they (the believers) conveyed to their people their decision to dissociate from them as is contained in their speech to them, except the statement of Abraham to his father, which was 'I shall surely seek forgiveness for you from God' which was neither dissociation nor turning towards him with friendship, rather it was a promise which he had made his father, hoping that he would believe in God.'

There is an alternative interpretation here, which is that the meaning and import of this verse *...but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he dissociated himself from him...*(9:114) is that Abraham's *conclusive* dissociation was after his promise to his father and after the latter's enmity to God became apparent to him. This is while the verse under scrutiny here, which is *...when they said to their people 'indeed, we dissociate from you...'* serves as information about the believers' *conclusive*, *categorical* dissociation. Thus the exception comprising Abraham's statement to his father is a promise (*al-wa'd*) which occurred before his *conclusive*, *categorical* dissociation, and it is not from the class or category (*jins*) of the general statement or the generality (*al-mustathnā minhu*) (preceding the exception), in which case the exception is an unconnected one (*istithnā munqaṭi'*) and not a connected one (*istithnā muttaṣil*).

Therefore, supposing that the exception is an unconnected one (*istithnā munqaṭi'*), it is permissible that it is an exception to *Indeed, there is for you a*

good example in Abraham and those with him.... and restricted to *...when they said to their people 'indeed, we dissociate from you...'* (This would be the general statement or the generality (*al-mustathnā minhu*)). Consequently, the meaning obtained would be: 'there is a worthy exemplar for you in the dissociation of Abraham and those with him, from their people, save what Abraham said to his father as a promise.'

However, if it is assumed that the exception is a connected one (*istithnā muttaṣil*) then the explanation is as previously stated. As for the general statement or the generality (*al-mustathnā minhu*), it is the part of God's speech that says *Indeed, there is for you a good example in Abraham...'* And the meaning therefore is: 'you have in Abraham an exemplar with respect to all his characteristics save his statement to his father *'I shall certainly ask forgiveness for you...'* for that is not an example for you to follow and emulate.'

Thus the verse *Indeed, there is for you a good example in Abraham...* till its end, is not in the context of affirming the emulation of Abraham with respect to all his characteristics (*khiṣāl*), including the promise to seek forgiveness, or forgiveness itself being (part of) the general statement or generality (*al-mustathnā minhu*) (for the promise to seek forgiveness was from Abraham's characteristics (*khiṣāl*)); rather it is in the context of affirming emulating him with respect to his dissociation from his polytheistic people while the promise to seek forgiveness in the hope of penitence and faith (on the part of his father) is not part of dissociation although it is also not part of inclining towards him in friendship.

The sentence, *...however I do not own anything for you from Allah...* serves as the completion of Abraham's statement. It is a statement that propounds the reality of the matter in that his prayer for forgiveness for his father or seeking it from God was not from the category or kind of seeking where the one seeking something owns or possesses what he seeks from the one whom he is seeking from, rather it is the kind of seeking where the poverty of creatureliness, bondage, and servitude and the humbleness and servility that comes with such a state, beseeches from the sufficiency of lordship and divinity, and the might and majesty that comes with such a state. Thus it is in the prerogative of God to accept the prayer of forgiveness and respond to it positively by being merciful due to His munificence and generosity or for Him to turn away and withhold His mercy. This is because none owns anything against God while He is the Master and Owner of everything. Thus He says *...Say: Who then controls anything against Allah...?* (5:17)

In sum, Abraham's statement *...however I do not own anything for you from Allah...* is in the nature of admitting and acknowledging his inability and incapacity (near God) and an attempt to rectify what he perceived and sensed of

the defect in affirming capacity and ability to himself when he said to his father *...'I shall certainly ask forgiveness for you...'* which is similar to what Shuʿayb said *...and my success in my task can only come from Allah...* (11:88) which was an attempt to rectify what he perceived and sensed of the defect of affirming capacity and ability to himself in an original and independent manner with respect to what he said to his people *...I desire nothing but reform so far as I am able...* (11:88).

Our Lord, we place our trust in You, and to You we turn, and to You is the final return: This is the conclusion of the statement transmitted from Abraham and those with him, and part of what is assigned to be emulated from them. It is a supplication from them to their Lord and an imploring to Him by them after they had dissociated from their people by means of that fierce dissociation described in this verse so that He may protect them from its consequences, and forgive them, and not let them down in their faith in Him.

Abraham and those with him had begun their supplication to God with an introduction in which they mentioned their state in which they were in with respect to dissociating from God's enemies. Hence, they said *...Our Lord, we place our trust in You* (rabbanā ʿalayka tawakkalnā), *and to You we turn* (wa ilayka anabnā)... by which they meant: we were surely in a position in life where we were established and capable and where we managed and looked after our own affairs, however now we are returning to You, which is *al-ināba,* and as for our affairs, which we used to manage and look after, we have bequeathed them to You and rendered Your will in place of our will, for You are our trustee in that. You may manage them as You wish and however You wish, which is *al-tawakkul.*

Thereafter they said *...and to You is the final return*. They meant that the destiny of everything, from deeds and the doer of deeds, is to You. Hence, by placing our trust in You and turning to You, we have let flow the course on which flows the reality of all matters with respect to the destiny of everything, which is to You, whereby we have emigrated to You and bequeathed the management of our affairs to You.

رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا رَبَّنَآ ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝٥

(60:5) Our Lord, do not make us a (test and) trial for those who disbelieve, and forgive us our Lord. Indeed You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.

The sentence, *Our Lord, do not make us a* (*test and*) *trial for those who disbelieve, and forgive us our Lord...* is the content of the believer's supplication in which they beseech God to safeguard them from the consequence of their dissociation from the disbelievers, and to forgive them. The word *fitna* which

occurs in this verse means 'that by which somebody is tested and tried', while the intent of *...make us a* (*test and*) *trial for those who disbelieve...* is to grant the disbelievers power and dominance or control and sway over the believers so that He may try and test the disbelievers. Consequently, the disbelievers would bring forth as much corruption as they possibly could and harm the believers by different means of harm and injury simply because the believers believed in God and rejected the disbeliever's gods, and dissociated from them and from what they worshipped.

The believers repeated their plea to God (in the form of) *rabbanā* (our Lord), in their supplications, again and again, in order to invoke divine mercy while the end part of this verse that says *...Indeed You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise* means: 'the victor, the dominant, the triumphant one who is not conquered or overpowered; the one who is perfect, accurate, skilful, and excellent in his actions; the one who is not rendered incapable and helpless in responding to their supplications. Thus He protects them from the intrigues and plots of His enemies and knows well how to protect and safeguard them'.

Exegetes have diverse additional opinions with regards to the interpretation of these two verses, which we have not cited here in order to maintain brevity; however, whoever wishes to sample them may refer to the detailed discussions.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيهِمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ۝٦

(60:6) Certainly, there is in them for you a good example for whoever hopes in Allah and the last day, but whoever turns away then indeed Allah is free of need, praiseworthy.

This verse is a repetition of the narrative of Abraham and those with him being exemplars, mentioned in (60:4). This repetition occurs in order to emphasize an affirmative response, and in order to demonstrate that this example is for those who desire God and the last day. Furthermore, just as Abraham and those with him are emulated in their dissociation from the disbelievers, likewise, they are worthy of emulation in their supplication and humble and earnest invocation.

It is apparent that the intent of *...for whoever hopes in Allah....* is to hope and desire His reward by means of faith in Him while the intent of *...for whoever hopes in ... the last day...* is to hope and desire what God has promised and prepared for the believers of reward, which is equivalent to faith.

The ending statement *...but whoever turns away then indeed Allah is free of need, praiseworthy...* means that God is free of needing their obedience and He is free of needing their compliance with His instruction to dissociate from the

disbelievers, rather they are the ones to benefit from that, while God is essentially self-sufficient and free of needing them and their obedience. Furthermore, He is praiseworthy in what He commands and prohibits them since His commands and prohibitions aim only to rectify their condition and to render their lives happy and blessed.

عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَوَدَّةً ۚ وَاللَّهُ قَدِيرٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

(60:7) It may be that Allah shall place love and friendship between you and those from them whom you have been enemies with, and Allah is All-Powerful and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, most Merciful.

The masculine third person plural suffix pronoun *hum* (them) attached to the preposition *min* (thereby becoming *minhum* and meaning: 'from them') refers to the disbelievers in respect of whom the believers were instructed to be inimical. These were the Meccan disbelievers. This is while the intent of the part of this verse that speaks about God placing love and friendship between the believers and the disbelievers is placing the same by granting the disbelievers success and good fortune (*al-tawfīq*) to accept the Muslim faith, thereby effecting a reconciliation between them, which is what happened when God enabled the conquest of Mecca for the believers. It does not mean an abrogation of the instruction to be inimical to them and to dissociate from them (while they continued to remain polytheists).

Hence, the meaning obtained is: "it is hoped and anticipated from God that He shall place between you—the community of believers—and those whom you have been inimical with from the disbelievers—and these are the Meccan disbelievers—love and friendship by means of granting them success and the good fortune (*al-tawfīq*) to accept the Muslim faith. Consequently, the mutual enmity shall be reversed into love and friendship while God is All-Powerful and He is Oft-Forgiving of the sins of His slaves. He is merciful towards them when they repent and submit to Him by becoming Muslims. Hence it is imperative for the believers to hope and anticipate that God shall substitute their enmity with friendship by means of His power, forgiveness, and mercy."

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٨﴾

(60:8) Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you on account of your religion and do not drive you out of your homes that you deal kindly and justly with them. Indeed, Allah loves those

who act justly.

This and the next verse contain an elaboration of the prohibition mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The intent of the part of this verse that says *...those who do not fight you on account of your religion and do not drive you out of your homes...* is a reference to other than the polytheists of Mecca. It is a reference to those polytheists who did not fight the believers and did not drive them out of their homes and had a peace treaty with the believers. This is while such words as *al-birr* (kindness, charitability), *al-iḥsān* (goodness), and *al-iqsāṭ* (justice) are a reference to just interaction and behavior. The statement *...that you deal kindly and justly with them...* functions as a substitute (*al-badl*) for the clause *...those who do not fight you on account of your religion and do not drive you out of your homes.* This is while the statement *... Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly* occurs as a justifying explanation for the statement, *Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you on account of your religion and do not drive you out of your homes that you deal kindly and justly with them.*

Hence the meaning obtained is: "God does not forbid you by His instruction contained in the verse *O you who believe, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies/friends....* (60:1) from behaving civilly and interacting with justice with those who do not fight you on account of your religion and do not drive you out from your homes. That is because such civil behavior and just interaction with them would be a behavior based on justice from yourselves, and God loves those who act justly."

It is claimed that this verse is actually abrogated by (9:5) which says *...so fight the polytheists wherever you find them* (9:5). However this is not true for the verse under scrutiny here, which is (60:8), only includes within its ambit or scope of application, the non-Muslims living under Shariʿa law (*ahl al-dhimma*) and those with whom a treaty exists (*ahl al-muʿāhada*). As for those who are at war with the Muslims (*ahl al-ḥarb*), then (60:8) does not apply to them. This is while (9:5) applies to those polytheists who are at war with the Muslims (*ahl al-ḥarb*) rather than those who have a treaty with them (*ahl al-muʿāhada*). Thus how can a verse, which does not compete or contradict another verse in terms of its meaning, be abrogated by the latter?!

إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَىٰ
إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ۝٩

(60:9) Allah only forbids you from those who fought you on account of your religion and drove you out from your homes, and support your expulsion, that you make them friends/allies. And whoever makes them friends/allies then those are the wrongdoers.

The identity of *...those who fought you on account of your religion and drove you out from your homes, and supported your expulsion...* is the Meccan polytheists while the clause *...and supported your expulsion...* means to support and aid in expulsion. The phrase "...that you make them friends/allies..." (*an tawallau hum*) functions as a substitute (*al-badl*) for the part that says "...those who fought you on account of your religion and drove you out from your homes, and expressed support for your expulsion..." (*alladhīna qātalūkum fī al-dīn wa akhrajūkum min diyārikum wa ẓāharūkum ʿalā ikhrājikum*).

The concluding sentence *...And whoever makes them friends/allies then those are the wrongdoers* occurs as a restriction of individuals or their separation and isolation, it being a reference to those who ally with the polytheists of Mecca and with those who support and help the latter against the Muslims, in that they are the wrongdoers and disobedient towards the prohibition. It does not include the generality of those (believers) who maintain a civil and just interaction with the disbelievers or it occurs as an emphasis for the prohibition against befriending them (that is, the Meccan polytheists).

Examining Narrations

(1) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* in relation to *O you who believe, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies/friends offering them friendship...*(60:1) that it descended in respect of Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'a. The wording of the verse is general but its meaning is specific. The reason for its revelation was that Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'a had embraced the Muslim faith and had emigrated to Medina from Mecca; however his family remained in Mecca. The Quraysh feared that the Messenger of God would march forth to Mecca and attack them, so they went to Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'a's family and asked them to write a letter to him, asking him for information regarding (the Prophet) Muḥammad's plans for Mecca. Did he intend to march forth to Mecca and attack them? So Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'a's family wrote to him asking him the same and he wrote in reply that the Messenger of God indeed intended to march forth to Mecca and attack them. He handed over his letter to a woman by the name Ṣafiyya who hid it in the upper side of her head near the forehead, and left (for Mecca), whereupon Gabriel descended to the Messenger of God and informed him of what had transpired. Consequently, the Messenger of God sent Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī and al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām in search of her. They caught up with her and Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī asked her: 'Where is the letter?' She replied: 'I do not have anything', so they searched her but did not find anything. Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām said: 'We do not find anything with her' at

which Amīr al-Mu'minīn ʿAlī said: 'I swear by God that the Messenger of God has not lied to us, and neither has he lied against Gabriel informing him of the events. Nor has Gabriel lied against God, glorious is His praise'. (Turning to the woman, he threatened her, saying) 'By God, you shall certainly bring out the letter or else I shall chop off your head and take it to the Messenger of God'. So she said: 'Step aside from me so that I may bring it out' and she brought out the letter from where she had hidden it in her forelock. Amīr al-Mu'minīn ʿAlī took it and brought it to the Messenger of God. The Messenger of God (summoned Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'a and) asked (him): 'Ḥāṭib, what is this?' He replied: 'By God, Messenger of God, I have not become a hypocrite or changed (sides). I testify that there is no God but (one) God and that you are the Messenger of God in truth, however my family wrote to me about the good behavior and positive treatment of the Quraysh towards them, and I desired to repay the Quraysh for their good behavior and treatment (of my family)'. That is when God revealed to the Messenger of God *O you who believe, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies/friends offering them friendship while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth...* (60:1) up until... *and Allah sees well all that you do* (60:3).

(2) Imām ʿAlī relates: 'The Messenger of God sent al-Zubayr, al-Miqdād, and me forth, instructing us: "Set out until you reach the garden (or meadow) of Khākh (a halting station for travellers on the road to Mecca), for there you shall find a female traveller with whom will be a letter. Confiscate it from her and bring it to me." So we set out till we arrived at the garden where we found the female traveller. We told her: "Bring out the letter." She replied: "I do not have a letter." We threatened her, saying: "You shall certainly bring out the letter or cast off your garments." So she brought out the letter from the braids of her hair. We brought the letter to the Prophet and it proved to be from Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'a, addressing some polytheists in Mecca, informing them of some of the plans of the Prophet. The Prophet (summoned Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'a and) asked (him): "Ḥāṭib, what is this?" He replied: "Do not make haste in judging me, Messenger of God. I was a man allied to the (tribe of) Quraysh although I was not part of them while the emigrants (*al-muhājirūn*) with you enjoy close kinship with them. The emigrants (*al-muhājirūn*) use this close kinship to protect their families and wealth in Mecca. So I desired, in light of the fact that such an advantage of close kinship with the Quraysh

eluded me, that I should bring about an advantage for myself over them which would help me protect my family. I did not do all that in the spirit of rejecting the faith, or in the spirit of disbelief, or with the aim of apostatizing from my faith," whereupon the Prophet said: "He has said the truth." ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said (at that moment): "Give me leave, Messenger of God so that I may strike his neck (and cut off his head)!" The Messenger of God said: "He is a man who witnessed and took part in the battle of al-Badr, and what do you know, perhaps God was aware of the veterans of the battle of al-Badr, and so He said "Do as you wish for I have forgiven you." Then descended the verse *O you who believe, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies/friends offering them friendship while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth...* (60:1) and it was in respect of this incident.'[1]

Author's comment: The meaning contained in this report is also transmitted in a number of reports from a number of the Prophet's companions such as Anas ibn Mālik, Jābir ibn ʿAbdillāh, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās, and from a group of Muslims of the second generation (*al-tābiʿūn*) such Ḥasan and others. As for the content of the report cited above, it requires critical scrutiny.

The obvious meaning of this report, rather the explicit meaning of it, is that Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Baltaʿa deserved to be killed for what he had done or that he deserved some punishment for what he had done if not punishment by death. (Nevertheless, he did deserve punishment). However he was exempted from the punishment because he was a veteran of the battle of al-Badr. Thus a veteran of the battle of al-Badr was not punished for any sin or offense he committed as the statement of the Prophet to ʿUmar explicitly declares in this report. This is the statement that says "he is a man who witnessed and participated in the battle of al-Badr and what do you know, perhaps God was aware of the veterans of the battle of al-Badr, and so He said 'do as you wish for I have forgiven you.'" In the variant of this report transmitted by al-Ḥasan, it says: 'They are surely the veterans of the battle of al-Badr, so avoid (punishing) the veterans of the battle of al-Badr. They are surely the veterans of the battle of al-Badr, so avoid (punishing) the veterans of the battle of al-Badr. They are surely the veterans of the battle of al-Badr, so avoid (punishing) the veterans of the battle of al-Badr.'

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Aḥmad, al-Ḥamīdī, ʿAbd ibn Ḥamīd, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abu Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī, Abu Awānah, Ibn Ḥibbān, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Mardawayhi while al-Bayhaqī and Abu Naʿīm jointly transmit it in their works of Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwah from him.

But what contradicts this statement of the Prophet is what transpired during the incident of *al-Ifk* (the incident of the lie perpetrated against the Prophet's wife ʿĀ'isha). The Prophet applied the *ḥadd* penalty to Musṭaḥ ibn Uthātha after the descent of the revelation which cleared ʿĀ'isha of any blame and proved her innocence. Musṭaḥ ibn Uthātha was among those who had falsely blamed ʿĀ'isha, however he was also one of the foremost of the emigrants (*muhājirūn*) and one of those who had witnessed and taken part in the battle of al-Badr as recorded in the *ṣaḥiḥ* compilations of al-Bukhāri and Muslim! Despite being a veteran and a participant in the battle of al-Badr the Prophet applied the *ḥadd* penalty on him as the many reports transmitted in the context of the commentary of the verse of *al-Ifk* attest.

What God's (alleged) statement addressing the veterans of the battle of al-Badr entails, that is: 'do as you like for I have forgiven you', and which denotes that whatever they may commit of sin or offense is forgiven to them, is obviously not realized or achieved, save by the removal of all religious responsibilities from them, from the obligatory (*wājib*), prohibited (*ḥarām*), recommended (*mustaḥab*), and reprehensible (*makrūh*) acts! This is because there is no meaning or sense in assigning a responsibility by God in favor of an imperative when its consequence is abolished for the person concerned and when obeying or disobeying the imperative is rendered the same as far as its consequences are concerned for the person subjected to such an imperative. This is what God's (alleged) statement 'do as you wish for I have forgiven you' suggests. It suggests general permissiveness on the basis of what spontaneously comes to mind regarding it.

The first necessary consequence of that is an all-inclusive forgiveness for them for sins committed; sins which the intellect obviously judges as not qualifying for pardon for its perpetrator save by means of repentance. Examples of such sins are: worshipping idols, disobeying God and His Messenger, belying the Prophet, contriving falsehoods against God and His Messenger, belittling the faith and its necessary, established laws. This is because of the Qur'anic verses in respect of these sins: verses which proscribe them, deny pardon for them without repentance by the perpetrator. Similar to these sins are misdeeds such as: wrongfully killing an innocent soul, spreading corruption in the earth, destroying crops, bespoiling lineages, permitting the shedding of blood, permitting violation of honor, and permitting wrongful confiscation of property. It is clear that the danger lies in the possibility of associating (such open-ended) forgiveness with these misdeeds and sins, not the actual application of forgiveness to them. So it cannot be countered that God safeguards such a person, who has already been forgiven, from committing such sins, even if He forgives

him if he were to commit them.

The second necessary consequence of that is that God's (alleged) speech 'do as you wish for I have forgiven you' specifies the totality of the laws of the Shari'a for the veterans of the battle of al-Badr, from ritual laws (*al-'ibādāt*) to social laws (*al-mu'āmalāt*), in that none of these applies to the veterans of al-Badr or relates to them! However, if that had been the case, then such blanket permissiveness would have been widely known among the Prophet's companions and indisputably accepted for the veterans of al-Badr, which is that this particular group is liberated from every religious duty and responsibility, and freed from the limits that arise due to the responsibility of worship. This is while the veterans of al-Badr themselves would be more deserving among themselves, and indeed very keen to safeguard the meaning and implication of liberation and freedom (from religious responsibilities) that this statement indicated, in terms of its significance and importance. And yet, there is no such evidence that proves this in the transmission of their reports or what is preserved of their reports, rather what may be understood from their biographies and especially their behavior during the trying crises which engulfed the Muslim community after the Prophet's demise, is contrary to that, so much so that it is impossible for anyone to deny that.

In addition, the freedom of a group of people and their liberation from the bonds of responsibility such that they may do whatever they wish and not care if they disobeyed God and His Messenger in the process, however great, serious, and despicable their acts may be, goes against the benefit and purpose of what religion calls to. It goes against the obligation of commanding good and forbidding wrong, and it goes against the purpose and wisdom of spreading godly teachings far and wide by transmission from the Messenger of God; teachings which the Messenger of God came forth with. This is because the people would have no reason or motivation to trust this particular group of people in what they said or transmitted of God and His Messenger's instructions, and this is because this particular group of people would be absolved of any wrong or any offence they committed, even if they came up with any lie, blasphemy or calumny or openly committed every wrong act and abomination!

All the above would apply even more so to the person of the Prophet for he was the chief of the veterans of al-Badr! God had sent him forth as a messenger, as a witness, as the bearer of glad tidings, as a warner, as one who called towards God with God's permission, and as a light-giving lamp, as is mentioned in Q33:45-46. Hence how would hearts trust, be at ease, or feel confident with the teachings of one who was allowed to get involved in every type of lie, falsehood, wrong, and evil? How would souls accept that such a person be described

with those noble attributes with which God praises him? Rather, how would it be possible for God, in His wisdom, to mandate testimony (*al-shahāda*) in favor of such a person, and to mandate response to the call of such a person when such a person could not be trusted in respect of his condition or speech? How could it be possible for God, in His wisdom, to consider such a person a light-giving lamp while He had permitted him to enliven falsehood as He had permitted him to illuminate the truth, and had permitted him to lead mankind astray while He had sent him forth to guide them? This is while the Qur'anic verses that argue in favor of the infallibility of the prophets, and the safeguarding of revelation from corruption, reject all of that! Moreover, all of that would invalidate the integrity of the contents of many Qur'anic verses which contain reproof and censure of the companions and the believers because of some of their acts of disobedience such as the verses revealed during the battle of Uḥud, al-Aḥzāb, Ḥunayn, and others, which admonish and reprimand them due to their defeat and their running away from the battlefield and the army. This is because God has promised hellfire as punishment for that! From among the clearest verses in this regard are the (censorious and reproaching) verses relating to the incident of *al-Ifk,* while from those involved in this sorry incident was Musṭaḥ ibn Uthātha, a veteran of the battle of al-Badr. From those verses are*: Every man of them shall have what he has earned of sin...* (24:10) while this verse does not exempt anyone from among them, and the verse *When you received it* (*that is, the lie*) *with your tongues and spoke* (*it*) *with your mouths whereof you had no knowledge of, and you deemed it an easy matter while with Allah it was grievous* (24:15). And the verse *Allah admonishes you that you should not return to the like of it ever again if you are believers* (24:17).

Thereafter, the clearest verses that demonstrate their incongruence with the cited report are these self-same verses of Sūrah al-Mumtaḥana, whose reason for revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*) this report under critical scrutiny describes, such as the verse *O you who believe, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies/friends offering them friendship...* (60:1) and the likes of *...And whoever does it among you then certainly he has lost the straight path* (60:1). And the verse *...And whoever makes them friends/allies then those are the wrongdoers* (60:9). It is known that these verses address and censure the generality of the believers. They warn the believers as a whole against offering friendship to the disbelievers, and against secretly confiding friendship to them when in fact, it was *one* of those believers, in this case, Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'a who had indeed taken the disbelievers as friends and had deceived the Muslim faith and the Muslims! So the chapter takes the act of one believer and attributes it to the generality of believers and addresses the censure and threat to all. So if in fact Ḥāṭib ibn Abī

Baltaʿa, who was a veteran of the battle of al-Badr, was free and released of all responsibility, the pen having had been lifted from him, and if he was truly the addressee of the likes of such speech as 'do as you wish for I have forgiven you', in (the sense) that he would have no sin to his credit whatever he does, nor any deviation attributed to him, nor would he be characterized by injustice and inequity, and that no censure would be levelled against him or any threatening warning, (and so if this was the case) then what is the reason in attributing or ascribing the deed of one person (that is, the deed of Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Baltaʿa), a deed which is characterized by unsatisfactory and negative qualities, to the generality of Muslims? Especially on the assumption that there is no quality or characteristic save the unsatisfactory and the negative in the deed of this one person! In such a case, the matter eventually leads to the assumption that one person brings forth an evil deed, which is permitted to him. He is not censured or blamed for it; however everyone else that ever brings forth such a deed is censured, blamed, and threatened with reprisals for it! In other words, the original perpetrator of a sin is permitted to carry out the misdeed and then another is punished or censured for that deed without being able to do anything about it, in the sense that unlike the veterans of al-Badr, he is not given a chance to mitigate the punishment or remove it. God's speech is far exalted and far above such an assumption!

(3) Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr relates: 'My mother visited me hoping for help and favor. This was at the moment when the Quraysh were concluding a peace treaty with the Messenger of God (at al-Ḥudaybiyya). She was still a polytheist at this time. So I asked the Prophet: "Should I maintain ties of kinship with her and behave courteously with her?" At that moment God revealed the verse *Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you on account of your religion and do not drive you out of your homes that you deal kindly and justly with them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly* (60:8). Consequently, he (the Prophet) replied in the affirmative, saying: "Yes, maintain ties of kinship (with her, be kind and courteous to her)."'[1]

(4) Qatāda said: (The verse) *Allah does not forbid you from dealing kindly and justly with those who do not fight you on account of your religion....* (60:8) was abrogated by (the verse) *...so fight the polytheists wherever you find them* (9:5).[2]

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of al-Bukhārī, Ibn al-Mundhir, and al-Naḥḥās, while al-Bayhaqī transmits it in Shuʿab al-Īmān from her.

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Abu Dāwūd who records it in his al-Taʿrīkh, and Ibn al-Mundhir from him.

Author's comment: You now know the argument against this view (as elaborated in the main text).

(5) Imām al-Ṣādiq said: 'Part of the most reliable and trustworthy handle of faith is that you love for the pleasure of God and hate for the pleasure of God, that you grant for the pleasure of God and refuse for the pleasure of God, Glorious and Mighty is He.'[1]

(6) Imām al-Ṣādiq said: 'All those who did not love on the basis of religion and did not hate on the basis of religion have no religion for themselves.'[2]

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1 *Al-Kāfī*, by means of the compiler's chain of transmission terminating at Saʿīd al-Aʿraj from him.

2 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, by means of his chain of transmission terminating at Isḥāq ibn ʿAmmār from him.

Verses 10-13

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا جَاءَكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ مُهَاجِرَاتٍ فَامْتَحِنُوهُنَّ ۖ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ
بِإِيمَانِهِنَّ ۖ فَإِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَاتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ ۖ لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَهُمْ وَلَا
هُمْ يَحِلُّونَ لَهُنَّ ۖ وَآتُوهُمْ مَا أَنْفَقُوا ۚ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ
أُجُورَهُنَّ ۚ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوا بِعِصَمِ الْكَوَافِرِ وَاسْأَلُوا مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ وَلْيَسْأَلُوا مَا أَنْفَقُوا ۚ
ذَٰلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللَّهِ ۖ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

(60:10): O you who believe, when believing women come to you as emigrants then examine them. Allah is most knowing of their faith. And if you know them to be believers then do not return them to the disbelievers. They (the believing women) are not lawful to them (the disbelieving men) nor are they (the disbelieving men) lawful to them (the believing women), but give them (the disbelieving men) what they have spent (as dower). And there is no blame on you if you marry them (the believing emigrant women) when you have given them their dues. And do not hold to marriage bonds with disbelieving women but ask for what you have spent (on them as dower) and let them (the disbelieving men) ask what they have spent (as dower on believing women). That is the judgment of Allah. He judges between you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

The content of this verse suggests that it was revealed after the peace treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya had been concluded. The terms of that treaty, concluded between the Prophet and the people of Mecca, contained a provision, which was that if any man from Mecca was to emigrate to Medina and join the Muslims there, they were to send him back to the Meccans. However if a man from the Muslims was to join the Meccans, they would not return him to the Muslims. Subsequently, a disbelieving (Meccan) woman embraced the Muslim faith and emigrated to Medina and so her husband came searching for her, seeking to return her home. The husband asked the Prophet to return her to him whereupon the Prophet replied that what they had mutually agreed upon as a condition in the peace treaty was the returning of *men* rather than *women*. Consequently, the Prophet did not return the woman to him; however he paid him the dower (*al-mahr*) that he had paid for her and this is what the verse under consideration indicates, along with rules pertaining to such women as befitting such a situation.

The statement, *O you who believe, when believing women come to you as*

emigrants.... identifies the women as 'believers' before their examination. This means that the knowledge that they were believers was on the basis of their manifesting and displaying the same. The part of this verse that says *...then examine them...* is an imperative to examine their faith by means of what will manifest their belief such as the testimony in favor of the (Muslim) faith (*al-shahāda*) or swearing an oath which would grant knowledge of their faith and engender trust in them. The part of this verse that says *...Allah is most knowing of their faith...* indicates that such conventional knowledge and trust (as that obtained by human examination) suffices in this matter rather than the certainty of the reality of their faith, which God alone is most knowledgeable of, true knowledge of which does not elude Him at all.

The statement *...And if you know them to be believers then do not return them to the disbelievers....* has the women described or qualified by the attribute of faith and belief (*mu'mināt*—believers). This description is in order to point out the reason for the judgement given (in this part of the verse, which is that the believing emigrant women were not to be sent back to the disbelievers from whom they had fled, and this was because they were believers). It is also in order to point out the reason for the severance of the marital bond between a believing woman and a disbelieving man (enunciated in the next part of this very verse). The next part of the verse consists of two sentences *They* (*the believing women*) *are not lawful to them* (*the disbelieving men*) *nor are they* (*the disbelieving men*) *lawful to them* (*the believing women*)... which together mean the severance of the marital bond between them but the two sentences do not prohibit them anything else.

The clause *...but give them* (*the disbelieving men*) *what they have spent* (*as dower*)... means 'give the disbelieving husband what he had spent on his former wife-turned-Muslim of the dower' while the part of this verse that says *And there is no blame on you if you marry them* (*the believing emigrant women*) *when you have given them their dues....* serves to remove the obstacle from Muslim men marrying these believing emigrant women provided the latter are given their dues. The Arabic word used for 'dues' in this verse is *ujūr* which is the plural of *ajr*. The word *ajr* here means the dower (*al-mahr*).

The instruction *...And do not hold to marriage bonds with disbelieving women...* has the word *'iṣam* occur in it. This word is the plural of the word *'iṣma* (which means protection and fortification). Here, it refers to the bond of permanent marriage which *protects* and *safeguards* the woman. Therefore, the phrase 'holding to marriage bonds' (*imsāk al-'isma*) refers to the (believing) man continuing to remain married to or continuing to keep to his disbelieving wife even after he has embraced the Muslim faith. Thus what is required of him,

after having embraced the Muslim faith, is to let go of his disbelieving wife irrespective of whether she was a polytheist or from the people of the Book. This is while it has already been discussed in the context of*And do not marry the polytheist women until they believe*...(2:221) and...*and* (*allowed to you are*) *the chaste women from among those who have been given the Book before you*...(Q5:5) that there is no abrogation between these two verses and the verse under study here.

Thereafter, the verse says ...*but ask for what you have spent* (*on them as dower*) *and let them* (*the disbelieving men*) *ask what they have spent* (*as dower on believing women*): The masculine *plural* imperative verb *is'alū*[1] in this section of the verse is an imperative directed at the believing Muslim men (and literally means: *you all believing Muslim men ask*...) while the part of this verse that says *wal yas'alū* has the masculine third person *plural* verb in the jussive (*yas'alū*)[2] also expressing a command or an imperative. It is an imperative directed at the disbelieving men (and literally means: *and let them all ask*....) Thus this part of the verse addresses the believing men and aims to say: if the wife of a Muslim man from among you joins the disbelievers then ask the disbelievers for what you have spent on her as dower while if the wife of a disbelieving man joins the Muslims then the disbelievers have the right to ask for her dower to be repaid to them.

Finally, this verse concludes by pointing out that what this verse contains is the judgment of God which He has legislated for the believers. Thus God says *That is the judgment of Allah. He judges between you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise*.

وَإِنْ فَاتَكُمْ شَيْءٌ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ فَعَاقَبْتُمْ فَآتُوا الَّذِينَ ذَهَبَتْ أَزْوَاجُهُمْ
مِثْلَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١﴾

(60:11) And if anything of your wives has passed away from you to the unbelievers, then your turn (of triumph) comes, give to those whose wives have gone away the like of what they have spent, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah in Whom you believe.

Al-Rāghib writes: 'the word *al-fawt* means the distance of something from a person such that (it becomes beyond his reach and) it is difficult or unfeasible

1 Translator's note: This masculine plural imperative verb *is'alū* is preceded by the conjunctive particle *wa*, which causes the *alif* in *is'alū* to lose its vowel, thereby becoming *was'alū*.

2 Translator's note: This masculine third person plural verb in the jussive—*yas'alū*—is reinforced by the particle *li* (*liyas'alū*) which particle loses its vowel due to the conjunctive particle wa preceding it, thereby becoming *wal yas'alū*.

(for him) to reach or attain it. God says *And if anything of your wives has passed away from you* (fātakum) *to the unbelievers....*'.

He (al-Rāghib) explains the nouns *al-muʿāqaba* and *al-ʿiqāb*[1] to mean: 'arriving or ending up at the ultimate result or outcome (*ʿuqba*) of something'.

The implication of the verb (*fa*)*ʿāqabtum* (translated as: then your turn (of triumph) comes) is (*fa*) *ʿāqabtum min al-kuffār* meaning: then when your turn (of triumph) comes in respect of the disbelievers. This means: when you acquire war booty from them, which is the ultimate result or outcome (*ʿuqba*) of a military attack or raid. It is also suggested that the verb *ʿāqaba* has the meaning of the verb *ʿaqaba* (which means: to come close after someone as though at his heels; to arrive at the heel of someone; to follow, to come after, to pursue). It is also suggested that the verb *ʿāqaba* is derived from the noun *al-ʿaqaba* which means *al-nawba*—one's turn or shift.

The most suitable meaning for the word *shay'un* (thing) which occurs in this verse is that of 'dower' (*al-mahr*). The preposition *min* (from) preceding the word *azwājikum* (*min azwājikum*—from your wives) is identified as the preposition *min* of *ibtidā al-ghāya*.[2] The phrase *ilā al-kuffār* (to the unbelievers) is related to the verbal construction *fātakum* (verb (*fāta*) + grammatical object of verb (second person masculine plural pronoun *kum*)) (has passed away from you all / has escaped from you all) which occurs at the beginning of this verse that says *And if anything of your wives has passed away....* (Therefore the meaning obtained is: *And if anything of your wives has passed away ... to the unbelievers*). This is while the part of this verse which says *...those whose wives have gone away...* refers to some of the believers. These are those to whom the masculine third person *plural* past tense verb *anfaqū* (meaning: 'they have spent', which occurs in the previous verse) applies.

Hence the meaning obtained is: "if your wives flee or escape from you to the disbelievers by joining them thereby causing you to lose the dower that you paid for them, and they are unable to return to you what you had expended on them of the dower, and then subsequently you obtain war booty from the disbelievers as a result of a raid or an attack, then give the believers whose wives have fled from them what you have obtained of the war booty similar in value

1 Translator's note: These two are the verbal nouns of the masculine second person plural past tense verb *ʿāqabtum*, translated as: 'your turn of triumph comes'.

2 The preposition *min* of *ibtidā al-ghāya* is the preposition denoting the starting point of a thing or the departure of a thing from a place, a person, or a state towards an end by traversing a distance. Here it means the starting point or departure of a thing (the dower (*shay'un*) paid by the husbands) escaping or passing away from a person (the wives).

to what they had paid of the dower."

This verse has also been interpreted in several different ways; these interpretations are far from normal understanding, and therefore we have ignored them here.

This verse comes to a close with an imperative *...and be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah, the One in Whom you believe.* The description of God here by means of the relative pronoun *alladhī* (the One) and the relative sentence *antum bihī mu'minūn* (in Whom you believe) is in order to justify the imperative, which is *...and be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah*. This is because the necessary corollary of faith and belief in God is *taqwā*—that is, being God-conscious and being careful of Him.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ لَا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَفْتَرِينَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا يَعْصِينَكَ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ ۙ فَبَايِعْهُنَّ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللَّهَ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

(60:12) O Prophet, if believing women come to you pledging that they shall not associate anything with Allah, that they shall not steal nor commit adultery or kill their children, or bring forth slander/lie which they had invented between their hands and feet, or disobey you in what is good, then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them from Allah. Indeed, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Merciful.

This verse contains the judgment from God regarding the pledge of the believing women to the Prophet. It stipulates conditions for them, some of which are common to both men and women, such as keeping away from polytheism and keeping away from disobeying the Messenger of God in what is good. This is while others are specifically required of women from the perspective that the management of the home naturally falls to them, and they are the means to the preservation of the chastity and integrity of the home, the perpetuation of lineages, and the purity and legitimacy of the birth of children. These are such conditions as refraining from stealing, refraining from adultery, refraining from killing children or claiming that a child born to them from a man other than their husband belongs to their husband when it does not, although it may be argued that these conditions contain aspects of commonality for both genders.

The verse is in the form of a conditional sentence where the part of it which says *O Prophet, if believing women come to you pledging that they shall not associate anything with Allah, that they shall not steal nor commit adultery or kill their children, or bring slander/lie which they had invented between their hands and*

feet, or disobey you in what is good... serves as its premise (that is, the part of the conditional sentence that contains the condition) while its result (or outcome) is the part which says *...then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them from Allah. Indeed, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Merciful.*

The clause *...that they shall not associate anything with Allah...* means not associating idols or other gods with God. This is a condition that is indispensable for any human in any situation, while the part of this verse which says *...that they shall not steal...* means they shall not steal from their husbands or from anyone else, but especially from their husbands as the context suggests. The part of this verse which says *...nor commit adultery...* means taking up lovers for themselves, while the part that says *...or kill their children...* means killing them by means of burying them alive (infanticide) or by other such means, and aborting foetuses.

The statement *...or bring forth slander/lie, which they had invented between their hands and feet...* refers to women becoming pregnant due to adultery and then giving birth to the child and attributing it to their husbands. Thus their associating the child in such a manner to their husbands and falsely attributing it to them is a slander and a calumny which they have invented between their hands and feet, and this is because when a mother delivers her child, it falls forth from between her hands and feet. The condition of shunning adultery does not dispense with this condition, since both these deeds are different from each other and each is individually subject to proscription and illegality.

The statement *...or disobey you in what is good...* places the disobedience in relation to the Prophet rather than in relation to God even though in effect disobeying the Prophet ultimately means disobeying God. Thus the meaning is that women should not fall behind in observing the Prophetic teachings and practices due to disobeying him; teachings and practices that the Prophet observed and established in the Muslim society whereby what he established became good among the Muslims and in the Muslim society. It becomes apparent from here that disobeying the good (*al-maʿṣiya fī al-maʿrūf*) includes abandoning good such as abandoning the ritual prayers (*tark al-ṣalāt*) or abandoning paying the poor-due (*tark al-zakāt*) and doing what is forbidden such as the women's wanton display of female finery in the pre-Islamic times (33:33).

This verse ends with *Indeed, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Merciful* which is a declaration of the necessity of forgiveness and the strengthening of hope.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ قَدْ يَئِسُوا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ كَمَا يَئِسَ الْكُفَّارُ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْقُبُورِ ﴿١٣﴾

(60:13) O you who believe do not make friends with a people on whom is the wrath of Allah. Indeed they have despaired from the

hereafter as have despaired the disbelievers from those who are in the graves.

O you who believe do not make friends with a people on whom is the wrath of Allah... refers to the Jews who are subject to God's wrath. This quality, in respect of the Jews, is frequently repeated in the Qur'an such as in...*and they became deserving of Allah's wrath...* (2:61). The end part of this verse clearly attests that the identity of 'a people' (on whom is the wrath of God) (*qawman* (*ghaḍiballāhu ʿalayhim*)) is different to the identity of the disbelievers (*al-kuffār*). The occurrence of the word 'hereafter' (*al-ākhira*) in this verse where it says ...*Indeed they despair from the hereafter...* means they despair from (or of) 'the reward of the hereafter' (*thawāb al-ākhira*) while those meant by the word 'the disbelievers' (*al-kuffār*) in ....*as despair the disbelievers from those who are in the graves...* are the disbelievers in God and those who reject the resurrection. It is also suggested that the word 'the disbelievers' (*al-kuffār*) in this verse refers (specifically) to the polytheists of Mecca (*kuffāru Makka*) and the letter *lām* (which together with the letter *alif* is prefixed to the word *kuffār,* rendering it *al-kuffār*) is in order to render the word definite and specific, thereby specifying that it refers specifically to the Meccan disbelievers.

This is while the preposition *min* in *min aṣḥāb al-qubūr* (from those who are in the graves) is identified as *min* of *ibtidā' al-ghāya.* The end part of this verse is a declaration of the Jew's and the unbeliever's eternal miserly and eternal ruin, and this is so that the believers may beware of befriending them and mixing with them. Thus the meaning obtained is: the Jews have despaired of the reward of the hereafter just as the rejecters of resurrection have despaired of the dead buried in the graves. It is also suggested that the word *kuffār* in this verse is a reference to those who bury their dead and conceal them in the earth—an invocation of a meaning of the word *kufr* which is: 'to hide' (*al-sitr*). It is also suggested that the word *kuffār* refers to the dead disbelievers and therefore the preposition *min* is *min bayāniyya*/*min libayān al-jins* (the preposition *min* that clarifies 'the type of' something). Consequently, the meaning obtained is: the Jews have despaired of the reward of the hereafter just as the disbelievers (from the type or of the type) buried in the graves have despaired of it. This is in light of the verse *Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all* (2:161).

Examining Narrations

(1) ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās relates: 'The Messenger of God made a peace treaty with the Meccan polytheists at al-Ḥudaybiyya. (One of the conditions of the peace treaty was) that whoever from the Meccans joined him (in Medina) would be returned to the Meccans by him, however

whoever from the companions of the Messenger of God joined the people of Mecca, belonged to them and they would not return him to the Messenger of God. They prepared a document containing that and signed it. After the peace treaty had been signed and while the Prophet was still at al-Ḥudaybiyya, Sabʿa bint al-Ḥārith al-Aslamiyya came to the Messenger of God as a Muslim, having embraced the faith. Thereupon her husband Musāfir—or alternatively as Muqātil says, his name was Ṣayfiyy ibn al-Rāhib—from the tribe of Banū Makhzūm, arrived at the Messenger of God in search of her, and he was a disbeliever. When he came to the Prophet, he said: "Muḥammad, return to me my wife for you had agreed with us the condition that you shall return to us whoever came to you from us while here is the copy of the treaty, the clay (tablet) on which it is written has yet to dry," whereupon this verse descended *O you who believe, when believing women come to you as emigrants*—from the abode of disbelief to the abode of Islam—*then examine them...* (60:10)'.

ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās said: 'Their examination was that they were made to swear: "I have not left due to hatred of my husband or because I desire one place instead of another or because I desire the world, rather I have left solely for the love of God and His Messenger." So the Messenger of God made her swear accordingly, which was that she had not left in hatred of her husband or because she had fallen in love with a man from us (the Muslims) whom she desired, rather she had left solely because she desired the Muslim faith, and the woman swore accordingly in the name of God, the One other than Whom there is no God. Consequently, the Messenger of God gave her husband her dower (*mahr*) and what he had spent on her but he did not return her to him. Subsequently, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb married her. The Messenger of God would return to the Meccans whoever came to him from their men-folk but would detain the women who came to him from them when he had examined them, and he would give their husbands their dowers.' Al-Zuhri relates: 'When this verse (that is, 60:10) was revealed, which contains the instruction ...*And do not hold to marriage bonds with disbelieving women...* (60:10) ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb divorced two of his wives who were in Mecca who were disbelievers. Their names were Qarība bint Abī Umayya ibn al-Mughīra and Umm Kulthūm bint ʿAmr ibn Jarwal al-Khuzāʿiyya, also known as Umm ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar. Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān subsequently married the former and the two of them continued with their polytheistic beliefs in

Mecca while the latter was subsequently married by Abu Jaḥm ibn Ḥudhāqa ibn Ghānim. He was from her tribe and they too remained on their polytheistic beliefs together. This is while Arwa bint Rabīʿa ibn al-Ḥārith ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib was married to Ṭalḥa ibn ʿUbaydillāh. The Muslim faith caused them to separate when the Qur'anic revelation forbidding holding on to marriage bonds with disbelieving women was revealed. Ṭalḥa had emigrated to Medina while she remained in Mecca, a disbeliever, with her tribe. Subsequently, Khālid ibn Saʿīd ibn al-ʿĀṣ ibn Umayya married her when she embraced the Muslim faith, and she was from those who fled to the Messenger of God from the disbelieving women. So the Messenger of God detained her and married her to Khālid. Umayya bin al-Bishr was married to al-Thābit ibn al-Daḥdāḥa. She fled from him to the Messenger of God while al-Thābit ibn al-Daḥdāḥa was at that time a disbeliever. The Messenger of God then married her to Sahl ibn Ḥanīf and she bore him ʿAbdullāh ibn Sahl.'

Al-Shaʿbī says: 'Zaynab, the daughter of the Messenger of God, was a wife to Abu al-ʿĀṣ ibn al-Rabīʿ. She embraced the Muslim faith and joined the Prophet in Medina while Abu al-ʿĀṣ ibn al-Rabīʿ remained in Mecca, a polytheist. Then he came to Medina where Zaynab granted him security and he then accepted the Muslim faith whereupon the Messenger of God returned her to him.'

Al-Jubbāʿī says: 'The peace treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya only had the condition that men would be returned and not women. No mention was made of women. Umm Kulthūm bint ʿAqaba ibn Abī Muʿīt emigrated to Medina from Mecca as a Muslim and so her two brothers arrived in Medina and asked the Messenger of God to return her to them. The Messenger of God replied: "The condition between us was with respect to men and not with respect to women," and he did not return her to them.'[1]

Author's comment: The information in these reports has been transmitted in other reports too, by means of Sunni chains of transmission, many of which have been mentioned by al-Suyūṭi in (his Qur'an commentary) *Al-Durr al-manthūr*. This is while al-Qummī has narrated in his *tafsīr* the examination to which the emigrant women were subjected, as presented earlier, and their subsequently not being returned to the disbelievers, and their dowers being paid to the latter.

1 *Majmaʿ al-bayān*.

(2) Al-Zuhri relates: 'Six was the total number of women who joined the polytheists from the wives of believing emigrant men, rejecting the Muslim faith. These were: Umm al-Ḥakam bint Abī Sufyān who was the wife of ʿAyāḍ ibn Shaddād al-Fihrī, and Fāṭima bint Abī Umayya ibn al-Mughīra, the sister of Umm Salama who was the wife of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Thus when ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb intended to emigrate, she refused (to emigrate with him) and left the faith. The third was Barūʿ bint ʿAqaba who was Shamās ibn ʿUthmān's wife, and ʿAbda bint ʿAbd al-ʿUzza ibn Faḍla, whom ʿAmr ibn ʿAbd Wudd (subsequently) married, and Hind bint Abī Jahl ibn Hishām who was the wife of Hishām ibn al-ʿĀṣ ibn Wā'il, and Kulthūm bint Jarwal who was the wife of ʿUmar. The Messenger of God gave all these men the dowers in respect of their wives from the war booty.'[1]

(3) Abu Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) said: 'Marrying the women of the People of the Book is undesirable and inappropriate'. Zurāra narrates that he said: 'May I be rendered your sacrifice (but) where is its prohibition?' He (the Imām) replied: *'...And do not hold to marriage bonds with disbelieving women ...* (60:10)'[2]

Author's comment: This report, generally speaking, refers to holding on to permanent marriage bonds (with them); in the sense of effectuating a permanent marriage or continuing to remain permanently married (to them).

(4) Abu Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) said with respect to *This day... are allowed to you... the chaste* (*women*) *from among those who have been given the Book before you...* (5:5) that: 'This verse is abrogated (*mansūkha*) by *...And do not hold to marriage bonds with disbelieving women*...(60:10).'[3]

Author's comment: Perhaps the intent of the Imām's speech that (60:10) (which forbids marriage bonds with disbelieving women) 'abrogated' (5:5) (which allows marriage with chaste women from the People of the Book) is the specification of (60:10) to 'permanent marriage', and the specification of (5:5) by means of (60:10) in the meaning of 'permanent marriage' (in that permanent marriage with chaste women from the People of the Book is forbidden) while what (5:5) indicates of allowance is specifically in favor of temporary marriage. The word 'abrogation' here cannot be a reference to its technical meaning

1 *Majmaʿ al-bayān*.

2 *Al-Kāfī*, by means of the compiler's chain of transmission terminating at Zurārah, from him.

3 *Al-Kāfī*, by means of the compiler's chain of transmission terminating at Zurārah, from him.

and that is because (60:10) (the abrogating verse) precedes (5:5) (the abrogated verse) in revelation, and there is no sense in an antecedent verse abrogating a subsequent verse (for it is the subsequent verse that abrogates the antecedent verse), in addition to which (5:5) is in the context of granting grace and favor while something of this nature negates abrogation.

(5) Abu Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) said with respect to *This day... are allowed to you... the chaste* (*women*) *from among those who have been given the Book before you*...(5:5) 'This speech (of God) is abrogated (*mansūkhun*) by the speech (of God) *And do not marry the idolatresses until they believe...* (2:221) and by the speech (of God) *And do not hold to marriage bonds with disbelieving women...* (60:10).'[1]

Author's comment: What weakens the reliability of this report, in addition to the unreliability of its transmitter (who is Abu al-Jārūd, Ziyād ibn al-Mundhir), is that (2:221) is in reference to polytheist women from the idol worshippers while (5:5) speaks of the permission to marry the women of the People of the Book, and hence there is no contradiction between the two verses such that one of them may abrogate the other. This is while the claim that (60:10) abrogated (5:5) has already been discussed above, and the commentary of (5:5) contains material which can be of benefit here too (so refer to it).

(6) Abu Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) said the following with respect to *And if anything of your wives has passed away from you to the unbelievers*...(60:11) 'so if they (your wives) join the disbelievers with whom you have a treaty then ask them (the disbelievers) for their dowers, and if anything (*shay'un*) from their women joins you then give them (the disbelievers) their dowers. That is the judgment of God. He judges between you'.[2]

Author's comment: The apparent meaning of the explanation is the interpretation of the word *shay'un* (anything/something) in this verse to mean 'the wife/woman'.

(7) Abu ʿAbdillāh al-Ṣādiq said: 'When the Messenger of God conquered Mecca, the men pledged allegiance. Thereafter, the women came forth to pledge allegiance to him which is when God revealed *O Prophet, if believing women come to you pledging that they shall not associate anything with Allah, and that they shall not steal nor commit adultery or kill their children, or bring forth slander/lie which they had invented between their hands and feet, or disobey you in what is good, then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them from Allah. Indeed, Allah is*

1 *Majmaʿ al-bayān*.

2 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, in the transmission of Abu al-Jārūd from him.

Oft-Forgiving, Merciful (60:12).

Hind chided (the Prophet at that moment, saying): 'As for (our) children, we raised them up from childhood and you killed them when they became adults.' Umm Ḥakīm bint al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām, who was 'Ikrima ibn Abī Jahl's wife, asked: 'Messenger of God, what is the good (*al-maʿrūf*) in respect of which God has instructed us not to disobey you?' He replied: '(It means) you shall not slap your cheeks, you shall not scratch your faces, you shall not pull out your hair, you shall not rend asunder your shirt pockets, you shall not blacken your clothes, and you shall not invoke afflictions (on others)'. The women pledged allegiance to the Messenger of God accordingly. She (that is, Umm Ḥakīm bint al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām) asked: 'Messenger of God, how do we pledge allegiance to you?' He replied: 'I do not shake hands with women' and he called for a goblet of water and placed his hand in it. Then he removed it and said: 'Now place your hands in this water'.[1]

Author's comment: Reports with such meanings are extensively transmitted (*mustafīḍa*) by means of Shiʿa and Sunni chains of transmission.

(8) 'Abdullāh in Sinān related: 'I asked Abu 'Abdillāh al-Ṣādiq about the meaning of *...they shall not disobey you in what is good...* (60:12) he replied: 'It is what God has rendered incumbent on the women, from the ritual prayers and the alms-tax—and what He ordered them of goodness.'[2]

Author's comment: This report testifies that what has been transmitted in the reports in the context of explaining *al-maʿrūf* (the good) such as 'you shall not strike your cheeks, etc', and in some of them there occurs the imperative 'you shall not make wanton display of female finery as in the pre-Islamic times (33:33)' is from the perspective of expressing some of the instances and examples of it.

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1 *Al-Kāfī*, by means of the compiler's chain of transmission terminating at Abān, from him.

2 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, by means of his chain of transmission terminating at him.

Chapter 61

Sūrah Al-Ṣaff (The Ranks)

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

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Introduction

This chapter encourages and motivates the believers to struggle in God's path and to fight the enemies of His religion. It informs them that this religion (of Islam) is God's shining light which the disbelievers from the People of the Book wish to blow out by their mouths, however God shall complete and perfect it however much the disbelievers may dislike it. He shall cause it to prevail over all religions, however much the polytheists may loathe it.

It also informs the believers that this prophet (that is, Prophet Muḥammad) in whom they believed is a Messenger from God whom God has sent forth with guidance and the religion of truth. It also informs them that Jesus son of Mary had given glad tidings about him to the Children of Israel.

Consequently, it is incumbent on the believers to determinedly resolve to obey him and to comply with what he commands them such as struggling in God's path and helping God in favor of His religion. This is so that God may bless them in their hereafter, aid them and open up avenues of success for them in their worldly lives, and support them against their enemies.

It is also essential for them not to say what they do not do just as it is essential for them not to go back on their promises. This is because such behavior attracts God's displeasure while the same offends and hurts the Messenger (of God, Muḥammad) too. In addition, such behavior contains the risk of God causing their hearts to go astray just as He did with the community of Moses when they hurt, annoyed, and offended the latter while they knew he was God's messenger to them. And God does not guide the unjust.

This chapter is of Medinan provenance as the content of its verses testifies.

Verses 1-9

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١﴾

(61:1) Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth declares the glory of Allah; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

An explanation for this verse has already been made before . This chapter begins with God's glorification because of what it (subsequently) contains of censure of the believers for saying what they do not do, as well as containing a warning to them of God's displeasure, and His causing the hearts of immoral and dissolute people to go astray.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢﴾

(61:2) O you who believe! Why do you say what you do not do?

The word *lima* in this verse (...*lima taqūlūna*...) is a shortened form of *limā,* which comprises of two letters *li* and *mā.* The letter *li* is identified as *lām al-ta'līl* (the (particle) *lām* of purpose) while the letter *mā* is identified as *mā istifhāmiyya* (the (particle) *mā* of interrogation/the interrogative particle *mā*).

This verse is in the context of censure for it censures the believers for saying what they do not do. This is while what some of the exegetes have understood of this verse should not be heeded. This is the understanding that those intended by *O you who believe...* are the hypocrites (and not the true and sincere believers). The (argument made is that the) hypocrites are the ones being censured in this verse rather than the (true and sincere) believers because (true and sincere) believers cannot be subject to censure and rebuke due to their great esteem and significance (which renders them beyond being criticized and scolded thus).

The reason this interpretation is untenable is because there are abundant Qur'anic verses which scold, rebuke, and admonish the believers, especially the verses revealed in respect of battles and military expeditions (undertaken during that time), and issues associated with such battles and expeditions. These are such as (the battles of) Uḥud, al-Aḥzāb, Ḥunayn, the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya, and Tabūk, spending in God's way, and other such things.

The righteous and pious from the believers became righteous and pious as well as esteemed and significant in worth due to the divine nurture and teachings that such reprimands and admonitions contain, which were directed to them in phases. Certainly, the believers did not become righteous and pious of their own accord!

Despite the apparent wording of this verse suggesting that each and every instance of an act being contrary to speech, each and every instance of a promise reneged, and each and every instance of a covenant breached, is intended and meant here for censure, which is true, for all of that is from the effects of the manifest contradicting the hidden, which is hypocrisy, yet the (literary) context afforded by the verses of this chapter, such as the verse *Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in* (*battle*) *lines as if they were a firm and compact wall* (61:4) and the later verse *O you who believe! Shall I lead you to merchandise which may*

deliver you from a painful chastisement? (61:10) and other such verses, suggests that the specific referent of censure and reprimand in this verse pertains to some of the Muslims breaking their word after having had promised to remain firm and resolute during battle, and after having had promised not to accept defeat and flee the battlefield, or for being sluggish and employing delaying tactics when asked to leave for battle (after having had previously agreed to do so), or for refusing to spend for battle provisions for themselves and others (when they had previously agreed to do so).

كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣﴾

(61:3) It is most hateful to Allah that you should say what you do not do.

The word *al-maqt* that occurs in this verse means "intense/severe/extreme hate and loathing/dislike." This verse furnishes a justifying explanation for the previous verse. God hates that a person should say what he does not do, for that is from hypocrisy.

That a person says what he does not do is different from him not accomplishing what he says. This is because the first instance is from hypocrisy while the second is due to weak intention, weak resolve, and feeble determination. The latter is a failing and a vice that stands contrary to the happiness and felicity of the human being, for God has established the happiness and felicity of the human being in doing good deeds and in acquiring noble virtues by means of freewill, the key to which lies in determination and resolve. There is no effectiveness save for one who is firm in his resolve, determination, and intention, while deeds being contrary to speech are the effects of a weak and feeble determination and intent. Consequently, in such cases, felicity and happiness cannot be hoped for such a person.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُمْ بُنْيَانٌ مَرْصُوصٌ ﴿٤﴾

(61:4) Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in (battle) lines as if they were a firm and compact wall.

The word *al-ṣaff* that occurs in this verse means "to set things, such as people and trees, in a straight and uniform line." This is how this word has been defined by al-Rāghib. The word *al-ṣaff* is a verbal noun in the meaning of an active participle. That is why it has not been rendered in the plural here. It occurs here as denoting the state, condition or circumstance (*al-ḥāl*) of the (implicit) subject of the (third person plural present tense) verb *yuqātilūna* (which is) 'those who fight'. Hence the meaning obtained is: 'God surely loves those who fight in His way when they are in the state or condition of standing

in (battle) lines.'

The word *bunyān* that occurs in this verse means "a structure" while the word *marṣūṣ* is derived from the word *al-riṣāṣ* (which means "lead"). Thus the (adjectival) phrase *bunyān marṣūṣ* (translated as: a firm wall/a compact wall) means "a structure that is strengthened with lead or tightly fitted and soldered with lead such that it is able to resist what hits it of destructive factors."

This verse furnishes a justifying explanation for the specific referent, concomitantly—the specific referent here being the people who promised to be resilient in battle and promised to behave with fortitude during it and then reneged on their promises—just as the previous verse explains the censure as being applicable to all those who say what they do not do (and concomitantly applies (all the more so) to those Muslims at the Prophet's time who promised to be resolute in battle but then reneged on their promises). And that is because when God loves those who fight and stick to their positions, refusing to flee, then its essential concomitance or corollary is that He hates those who promise to be resolute (in battle) and then flee upon reaching the battlefield (thereby contravening their word).

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُونَنِي وَقَدْ تَعْلَمُونَ أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ ۖ فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٥﴾

(61:5) And (remember) when Moses said to his people: O my people! Why do you give me trouble when you know that I am indeed Allah's messenger to you? But when they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside, and Allah does not guide the transgressing people.

This verse refers to the pain and trouble the Children of Israel caused their prophet, which was the prophet Moses, and their persistence in troubling him (even when it was clear that it was wrong) till it led to God causing their hearts to go astray. This verse thus contains a concomitant prohibition to the believers not to hurt, annoy, or trouble the Messenger of God, Muḥammad, for then such behavior would lead them to suffer the same fate as that of the Children of Israel. This fate was God causing their hearts to go astray. God has warned in the Qur'an *Surely, (as for) those who annoy Allah and His Messenger, Allah has cursed them in this world and the hereafter, and He has prepared for them a disgraceful chastisement* (33:57).

This verse, in what it contains of a concomitant prohibition (to the Muslims), is in the same vein as (the following two verses) *O you who believe! Be not like those who troubled Moses (by speaking evil things of him), but Allah cleared him of what they said, and he was eminent in Allah's eyes* (33:69). *O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and speak the right word* (33:70).

The content of these two verses (that is 33:69 and 33:70) and the mention of God's clearing Moses of the calumnies the Children of Israel uttered against him demonstrates that the meaning of Moses being subjected to pain, hurt, and annoyance, which God cleared him of, was not that the Children of Israel disobeyed Moses' commands or abandoned obeying him, for if that were the case, then there would be no meaning in God clearing him. Rather, what they did was to slander and defame him, and to ascribe to him what consisted of shame, infamy, and disgrace, due to which Moses was hurt, pained, and annoyed, and so God cleared him of the calumnies they had attributed to him. God's speech in the second verse *O you who believe! Be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah and speak the right word* (33:70) supports this understanding of (33:69). Another verse which supports this understanding is (33:53), where God refers to some of the hurtful, annoying, and troubling instances which the Prophet Muḥammad endured by way of speech or deed. It says *O you who believe! Do not enter the houses of the Prophet* (*Muḥammad*) *unless permission is given to you for a meal,* (*and then*) *not* (*so early as*) *to wait for its preparation, but when you are invited, enter, and when you have taken the food, then disperse. Linger not for conversation; surely this troubles the Prophet, but he is shy to tell you, however Allah is not shy of the truth. And when you ask of them* (*the wives of the Prophet*) *any goods, ask of them from behind a curtain; this is purer for your hearts and* (*for*) *their hearts; and it does not behove you that you should trouble the Messenger of God, nor that you should marry his wives after him ever; surely this is grievous in the sight of Allah* (33:53).

Thus the meaning arrived at is that (61:5) contains a (warning) message (to the Muslims) not to knowingly hurt or annoy the Prophet Muḥammad by means of word or deed just as the concluding part frightens and warns them that to do so is immoral, which could perhaps lead to God causing the heart of the person who commits such an offence to go astray.

The meaning of the word *al-zaygh* in the latter half of this verse *...But when they turned aside...* means "to deviate from integrity and rectitude." Its necessary corollary is to turn away from the truth towards falsehood.

This is while the part of this verse which says *...Allah made their hearts turn aside...* means: 'God withheld His mercy and compassion and discontinued His guidance for them', just as the justifying explanation in the end part of this verse attests *...and Allah does not guide the transgressing people.* Here, the end part of the verse explains and justifies that 'God's turning their hearts aside' was by means of lack of (divine) guidance or by means of withholding divine guidance. Such a 'turning of hearts aside' is by way of requital, and by way of confirming and firmly establishing their turning aside; an offence which

they first committed due to their immorality and evil, which in turn attracted a consequential reprisal, just as God says ...*He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it! But He does not cause to err by it* (*any*) *except the transgressors* (2:26). Thus it is not an instance of God causing hearts to go astray or turn aside from the truth right from the very beginning, and it is not a case of primary misguidance, for that does not behove God's glory and sanctity.

Here, the invalidity of what is said (by some), becomes clear. This is the objection that (1) it is not permissible to understand the part of this verse which says ... *Allah made their hearts turn aside...* to mean 'God caused their hearts to stray from faith'. This is because it is impermissible that God should cause anyone to stray from faith. Furthermore, (the objection continues), (2) if this part of the verse does mean 'God caused hearts to stray from faith' then it fails to make sense and is useless. This is because if the people have (already) strayed and deviated from faith then they have (already) become disbelievers, and so therefore there is no meaning to the statement 'God caused their hearts to stray from faith' (since they have already strayed)!

The aspect of invalidity of the first objection, which says that it is impermissible for God to cause someone to go astray, and that it is absolutely forbidden because it contains the basis of injustice, is that it becomes the basis of injustice if 'God's causing hearts to go astray' was an instance of primary misguidance. However if 'God's causing hearts to go astray' or His 'leaving people to stray' was by way of requital, where its reality was to withhold mercy and discontinue guidance because the person him or herself caused that due to his or her evil and immorality, and his or her turning away from God's mercy and guidance, then there is no proof for its impermissibility, neither on the basis of reason nor on the basis of transmitted teachings.

As for the second objection, which is that the interpretation does not make sense and is useless, then the rejoinder to that is as follows: what is imputed to the person of deviation, and the disbelief realized with it, comes about due to the person's evil and immorality while what is ascribed to God is the confirmation and entrenching of deviation in the person's heart, and stamping the heart by it. Therefore, the deviation of the person from faith due to his or her evil and immorality, and the state of disbelief realized due to it does not substitute God's establishment of deviation and disbelief in the person's heart by way of requital.

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَاةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ ۖ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٦﴾

(61:6) And (remember) when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of

> Israel! Surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you (all), verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a messenger who will come after me, his name being Aḥmad, but when he came to them with clear arguments they said: This is clear magic.

It has already been mentioned in the 'Introduction' section that this verse, the verse preceding it, and the three verses succeeding it occur in the context of registering that the Prophet (Muḥammad) was a messenger, whose Messengership was well-known among the believers, and whom God had sent forth with guidance and the religion of truth so that He may cause it to prevail over all religions even if the disbelievers from the People of the Book hated it. In addition, what he had come with of religion was a shining light from God which the polytheists wanted to blow out with their mouths; however, God would perfect His light even if the polytheists loathed it.

Therefore, it was necessary for the believers not to hurt and annoy him while they knew he was God's messenger to them, and that they should help him and struggle in the way of their Lord in order to enliven His religion and spread wide His word.

Consequently, from the above, it is understood that *And* (*remember*) *when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Surely I am Allah's messenger to you* (*all*)... occurs as an introduction to what shall be mentioned of the Prophet (Muḥammad) being a messenger, whose glad tidings were given well before God sent him with guidance and the religion of truth, and that his religion was God's light by which mankind would be guided aright.

What God relates of the speech of Jesus son of Mary, encapsulated in this verse *And* (*remember*) *when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Surely I am Allah's messenger to you* (*all*)*, verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a messenger who will come after me, his name being Aḥmad...* serves as a summary of his mission while he (Jesus) had given advance notice of the core basis of his mission by means of the words *Surely I am Allah's messenger to you* (*all*)... Thus he pointed out that he had no significance save that he was a carrier of God's message to them. Thereafter, he clarified the content of what had been sent to them so that it could be conveyed to them as part of his mission and message ...*verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a messenger who will come after me, his name being Aḥmad...*

The statement ...*verifying that which is before me of the Torah...* expresses that his mission and call do not differ from the religion of the Torah, nor do they contradict its laws, rather they confirm them, and they did not rescind or abrogate its laws save a small part of them. Abrogation expresses the termination of the period of the law and not its invalidity. This is the reason Jesus combined

attesting to the Torah and abrogating some of its laws in what God relates of his speech in *And* (*I come*) *confirming that which is before me of the Torah and that I may make lawful to you part of that which was forbidden to you* (3:50). He did not clarify to them save some of what they differed in, as in the following verse which relates his speech: *And when Jesus came with clear arguments he said: I have come to you indeed with wisdom, and that I may make clear to you part of what you differ in; so be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah and obey me* (43:63).

The part statement *...and giving the good news of a messenger who will come after me, his name being Aḥmad...* indicates the second part of Jesus' mission while the first part of his mission was indicated by *...verifying that which is before me of the Torah...*

It is well-known that good news (*al-bushrā*) is news which pleases and delights the one informed, and makes him or her happy and glad. This does not happen save by means of something of goodness coming to such a person, and pertaining to him or her. The goodness anticipated from the sending forth of the Prophet Muḥammad, and his mission, lies in the opening of a door of divine mercy and compassion for mankind, wherein lies felicity for their worldly life and the life to come, stemming from true beliefs or virtuous deeds or both. This is while the good news of a prophet after a prophet, and the good news of a new call and mission after the advent of a previous call and its establishment is conceivable (only) if the new call and mission is more advanced and superior in what it contains of true beliefs and modified laws for the society to act on, and more comprehensive and encompassing of the happiness and well-being of the human being in this life and the next. This is while divine calls are (actually) one (in essence). They do not become invalid by the passage of time and the alternation of nights and days.

From the aforementioned explanation, it becomes clear that the meaning of the clause *...and giving the good news of a messenger who will come after me, his name being Aḥmad...* means that what the Prophet Aḥmad came forth with was more advanced and superior and more complete with regards to what the Torah contained and with regards to what Jesus son of Mary was sent forth with. This is while Jesus son of Mary was the intermediate link between the two missions or calls.

Thus the meaning of *And* (*remember*) *when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Surely I am Allah's messenger to you* (*all*)*, verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a messenger who will come after me, his name being Aḥmad...* is that: 'I am a messenger from God to you all. I call you all to the law-code of the Torah and the path it advocates—and so that I may make lawful for you some of what was forbidden to you—and

this is the law-code and path that God shall complete by the sending forth of a prophet who shall come after me, whose name is Aḥmad.'

This is true, for assiduous and careful thought on the divine teachings and wisdom that the Islamic faith calls to shows that it is more accurate and precise than the other heavenly law-codes and paths that preceded it, especially what is accredited to it of the teaching of God's unicity (*al-tawhīd*). The doctrine of God's unicity is the primary principle on which every (Islamic) instruction is based and to which pertain all the true teachings (of Islam). A part of the discussion relevant to this topic has already been made previously in this work.

Similar is the case with the practical laws and regulations (of Islam). These have not left aside anything of human acts, whether small or big, of individual or social relevance, save that they have regulated it, demarcated its limits, and established it on the basis of God's unicity, and directed it towards the goal of (human) felicity.

The following verse points to this fact *Those who follow the Messenger-Prophet, the* ummī*, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Injīl* (*who*) *enjoins them good and forbids them evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and makes unlawful to them impure things, and removes from them their burden and the shackles which were upon them; so* (*as for*) *those who believe in him and honor him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful* (7:157). There are other verses too that describe the Qur'an likewise.

Although the part of (61:6) that says *...and giving the good news of a messenger who will come after me....* explicitly acknowledges and declares that the good news was announced, yet this verse itself does not prove that it was something mentioned in the book of Jesus son of Mary. Nevertheless, the following two verses do prove it. These are the verses (7:157) and (48:29). (7:157), mentioned previously states *Those who follow the Messenger-Prophet, the* ummī*, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Injīl...* (7:157) while (48:29), describing the Prophet, states *Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and pleasure; their marks are in their faces because of the effect of prostration; that is their description in the Torah and their description in the Injīl...* (48:29)

The content of (61:6) proves that Jesus son of Mary mentioned the Prophet Muḥammad by the name Aḥmad *... his name being Aḥmad...* it being a name for him by which he was known among the people just as he was apparently named Muḥammad, which is clear and beyond doubt.

Support (for this understanding) is available from the poetry of Ḥassān, which says:

God, those who encircle His throne, and the good (ones),

Bless the blessed (*al-mubārak*) Aḥmad.

And from the poetry of Abū Ṭālib are the following lines:

They said to Aḥmad, you are (but) a man, of ineloquent speech, (and) of inconsequential means.

Hearken! Aḥmad has come to them with truth, and he did not come to them with falsehood.

Abū Ṭālib's statement to al-ʿAbbās, Ḥamza, Jaʿfar, and ʿAlī, commending them to aid the Prophet, occurs as follows:

Be (protective) shields in aid of Aḥmad, against all mankind,

May my mother and what she begot be ransomed for you all.

The following is yet another piece of Abū Ṭālib's poetry where he calls the Prophet by his other name of Muḥammad:

Do they not know that we have found Muḥammad (to be) a prophet like Moses, inscribed (as such) in the earliest books?

It is understood from the poetic verse above that they had found mention of the prophecy of the Prophet Muḥammad's advent in the heavenly scriptures; scriptures which were with the People of the Book at that time, there.

That which further supports this understanding is the conversion to Islam of a group of the People of the Book from the Jews and the Christians, including a group of their scholars such as ʿAbdullāh ibn Salām and others. They used to hear these Qur'anic verses, which mention the glad tidings of the Prophet Muḥammad's advent and his mention in the Torah and the New Testament (or the Gospels) and so they embraced it positively and did not belie it. Nor did they exhibit any doubt or wavering in regards to it.

As for the absence of the mention of Jesus' prophecy regarding the Prophet Muḥammad's advent in the Gospels in circulation these days, despite the prophecy's clarity, then the Qur'an, which is a lasting, miraculous sign, is in no need of the Gospels' attestation. This is while the discussion regarding the Gospels' transmission and reliability has already taken place in a previous volume of this work.

The concluding statement *...but when he came to them with clear arguments they said: This is clear magic.* The masculine third person singular pronoun 'he' in this verse refers to Aḥmad (the Prophet) and the masculine third person plural pronoun 'them' refers to the Children of Israel, or to them and to others. The identity of the 'clear arguments' in this verse is the good news, the miracle of the Qur'an, and all the other prophetic signs. Thus the meaning obtained is:

'When Aḥmad, the one prophesied, came to the Children of Israel, or to them and to others, with clear arguments and signs, which included Jesus' prophecy, they responded with "This is clear magic" (*hādhā siḥrun mubīn*).' This part of the verse is also read as "this is a clear magician." It is also said that the pronoun 'he' refers to Jesus, however the context does not agree with it.

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعَىٰ إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٧﴾

(61:7) And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah while he is being invited to Islam, and Allah does not guide the unjust people.

The question with which this verse begins, and which reads *And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah while he is being invited to Islam...* is in a rhetorical style which aims to convey censure, disapproval, rebuke, and condemnation (by the speaker) coupled with surprise (on the speaker's part in respect of a deed by the addressee, which is not befitting him/her (which in this case is the act of forging a lie against God while being invited to Islam)). This kind of rhetorical interrogative is known as *al-istifhām lil-inkār.* It occurs here as a rebuttal to their speech (related in the immediately preceding verse), which is ...*This is clear magic* (61:6), for the latter speech contends that the Prophet Muḥammad is not a messenger and that what has come to him of God's religion is not from God.

The meaning of 'Islam' in this verse is the religion to which the Messenger of God calls, in that it entails submission to God in what He wants and instructs of beliefs and acts. There is no doubt that the necessary requirement of God's divinity and godhead entails that His slaves submit to Him with absolute submission. Therefore, there is no doubt that the religion, which is Islam, belongs to God. It is His true religion, and one which it is imperative that it be professed and adhered to. Consequently, the claim that it is invalid and false and not from God is to forge a lie against God!

From here, it becomes clear that the clause ...*while he is being invited to Islam...* consists of proof and evidence that the nature of their speech ...*This is clear magic* (61:6) is a fabrication against God.

Forging a lie is unjust. The intellect does not doubt that it is unjust while the Muslim faith prohibits it. The greatness of the injustice committed is related to the greatness of the one subjected to it. Therefore, if the one subjected to injustice is God then it becomes the greatest injustice, and consequently there is none more unjust than the one who forges a lie against God.

Thus the meaning obtained is: "there is none more unjust than the one who

forges a lie against God—which he or she does by negating the attribution of God's religion to Him—and this is when his or her state and condition is that he or she is being invited to the religion of Islam, which does not comprise save submission to God in what He intends. And there is no doubt that the religion of Islam is from God. This is while God does not guide the unjust people!"

يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨﴾

(61:8) They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths but Allah will perfect His light, though the unbelievers may be averse.

This verse mentions 'putting out the light of God' as follows: *They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths...* Putting out the light of God means "to invalidate and abolish it, to cause its rise and radiance to go away," while 'putting out the light of God with the mouth' mentioned in this verse means "to blow it out (with the mouth)."

A similar verse occurs in Sūrah al-Tawba, which reads *They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, and Allah will not consent save to perfect His light, though the unbelievers are averse* (9:32).

(But there is a subtle difference in the Arabic construction of these two verses as pointed out by al-Rāghib). Al-Rāghib points out that in (9:32) the Arabic construction of the verse occurs as: *yuridūna an yuṭfi'ū nūrallāhi* while in (61:8) the Arabic construction of the verse occurs as: *yuridūna liyuṭfi'ū nūrallāhi.* The difference between the two verses (he points out) is that in (9:32), where the Arabic reads as *yuridūna an yuṭfi'ū nūrallāhi,* means that: 'they desire to put out the light of God' while in (61:8) where the Arabic reads as *yuridūna liyuṭfi'ū nūrallāhi* means that: 'they desire *a means* by which they can put out the light of God'.

The meaning arrived at thus is that the intent of the 'desire' in verse (9:32), which reads in Arabic as *yuridūna an yuṭfi'ū nūrallāhi* pertains to the putting out of the light of God itself while the intent of the 'desire' in verse (61:8), which in Arabic reads as *yuridūna liyuṭfi'ū nūrallāhi* pertains to the cause/means which would lead to the putting out of the light of God. This is blowing by the mouth, while putting the light out is the ultimate purpose and aim.

This verse and what follows it occur as a commentary to the meaning of what has preceded in the previous verse. The previous verse spoke about the injustice of the Prophet's (disbelieving) interlocutors, which consisted of (unjustly) accusing the mission and call (of the Prophet Muḥammad) as being magic and sorcery, and God (consequently) refusing to guide them because they were unjust people. The meaning thus arrived at is that they desire to put out the light of God by blowing it out by their mouths however God shall not

guide them to their goal and purpose, instead He shall perfect His light and cause His religion to prevail over all religions.

The statement *They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths....* means: '(putting it out) by blowing it out with their mouths' just as a candle is extinguished by blowing it out. This means that they (felt and) claimed that the light of God, which was His religion, was a weak and feeble light just like the light of the candle, which could be blown out by a mere puff. Thus they accused it of being magic and negated its attribution to God.

However, they had erred in their claim (and supposition). This is because it (Islam) is God's light which could not be extinguished, and God had decided to perfect it even if the disbelievers hated it. This is while God (always) achieves His aim. This is the meaning of the part of this verse which says ...*but Allah will perfect His light, though the unbelievers may be averse.*

هُوَ الَّذِى أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ۝٩

(61:9) He it is Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it overcome the religions, all of them, though the polytheists may be averse.

In this verse God describes His religion as *dīn al-ḥaqq* (translated literally as: the religion of truth). The possessive or *iḍāfa* construct *dīn al-ḥaqq* in this verse is said to be an *iḍāfa bayāniyya,* however, it is obvious, on careful consideration, that it is primarily an *iḍāfa lāmiyya* in that both truth and falsehood have a religion that is related and specific to them while God chose the religion, which is that *of* (or belonging to) the truth (*al-dīn alladhī lil-ḥaqq*)—and He (God) is the Truth Most High—and He sent forth His Messenger.

This verse says that God sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth so ...*that He may make it overcome the religions, all of them.* To make something overcome another means to help it and to render it triumphant over the latter, while the meaning of 'the religions, all of them' is every path or way that is followed other than the path or way of God, which is the religion of Islam. This verse occurs as an explanation for the (part of the) previous verse which says ...*but Allah will perfect His light* (61:8). Hence the meaning obtained is: 'God will perfect His light because He is the One who sent forth His Messenger with His light, which (light) is guidance and the religion of truth so that He may make it triumphant over all religions even if the polytheists from the idol worshippers hate it.'

And it is understood from these two verses that the religion of truth is the light of God on earth, which is also understood from the verse ...*a likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp...* (24:35) and an explanation has been

made in the commentary to that verse.

Examining Narrations

(1) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* explains the verse *Allah surely loves those who fight in His way in* (*battle*) *lines as if they were a firm and compact wall* (61:4) as follows: 'They form a line like a firm and compact wall, which does not disappear or go away.'

(2) *Majmaʿ al-bayān* has the following regarding the verse *And* (*remember*) *when Moses said to his people: O my people! Why do you trouble me when you know that I am indeed Allah's messenger to you? But when they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside, and Allah does not guide the transgressing people* (61:5): It is related in the story of Korah that he (schemed against Moses and) planted a woman on him (or foisted a woman on to him), and claimed he (Moses) had committed adultery with her. They (the Children of Israel) (also) falsely accused him of murdering Aaron!

(3) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* has the following regarding the verse *And* (*remember*) *when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Surely I am Allah's messenger to you* (*all*)*, verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a messenger who will come after me, his name being Aḥmad, but when he came to them with clear arguments they said: This is clear magic* (61:6): Some Jews asked the Messenger of God: 'Why were you named Aḥmad (more praised), Muḥammad (much praised), al-Bashīr (one who gives glad tidings), and al-Nadhīr (one who warns)?' He replied: 'As for being named Muḥammad (much praised) that is because I am praised on earth (thereby rendered much praised). As for being named Aḥmad (more praised) that is because I am more praised in the heavens than I am on earth. As for being named al-Bashīr (one who gives glad tidings) that is because I give glad tidings of paradise to whoever obeys God while I was named al-Nadhīr (one who warns) because I warn of hell-fire to whoever disobeys God.'

(4) Al-ʿIrbāḍ ibn Sāriya relates in respect of (61:6): 'I heard the Messenger of God say: "I am ʿAbdullah (God's slave) in the *Umm al-Kitāb* (the Mother Book) and *khātam al-nabiyyīn* (the seal of the prophets)—and this was when yet Adam was being twined and twisted (or kneaded) in his clay—I will inform you (all) its interpretation. I am the supplication of Abraham, I am the good news of Jesus to his people, and I am the vision of my mother who saw that a light came forth from her due to

which the castles of Byzantium were illuminated.""[1]

(5) Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥya *ṣāḥib al-sābiriyy* (the one who engaged in the trade of a delicate kind of cloth, of excellent quality, called *al-sābiriyy*) relates: 'Abū Qurra, the companion of the chief Catholic bishop asked me to take him to Imām al-Riḍā. So I sought the Imām's permission (for that) and the Imām agreed, saying: "Let him visit me." When he (Abū Qurra) came into the presence of the Imām, he kissed his carpet, saying: "This is the manner in which we are obliged, in our religion, to behave with the honorable people of our time." Thereafter he said: "May God render you well. What would you say regarding a group that claims something, which another just group testifies to?" The Imām said: "(it means) the claim is in their (the former's) favor" (meaning that the claim is correct). He (Abū Qurra) then said: "What would you say if the other group claimed something but found none other than themselves attesting to it?" The Imām said: "Their claim is of no consequence." Thereupon, he (Abū Qurra) said: "We (the Christians) claim that Jesus is the spirit of God and His word, and the Muslims agree with us on that and testify to that. This is while the Muslims claim that Muḥammad is a prophet but we disagree with them on that and do not follow them on that. Therefore, what we all agree on is better than what we all disagree on." Abū al-Ḥasan (al-Riḍā) asked: "What is your name?" He replied: "Yuḥannā." The Imām said: "Yuḥannā, we do testify to and believe in Jesus, the spirit of God and His word, the one who believed in Muḥammad and gave glad tidings of his advent, the one who acknowledged and testified that he was a slave and a bondsman (of God). So if Jesus, who is the spirit of God and His word for you, is not the same one who believed in Muḥammad and gave glad tidings of his advent, and nor is he one who acknowledged and testified to God by means of worship and servitude to Him, then we dissociate from him, in which case where lies our shared unity?" At this he (Yuḥannā) stood up, and addressing Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥya said: "Rise, for he (the Imām) has not benefitted us in this gathering.""[2]

Author's comment: It is as if he (Yuḥannā) intended by his words—"rise, for he has not benefitted us in this gathering"—to say that his visiting the Imām did not benefit him because he failed to succeed with respect to what he had brought of proof.

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Mardawayhi, from him.

2 *Al-'Uyūn*, by means of his chain terminating at Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā.

(6) Yaʿqūb ibn Shuʿayb relates from Imām al-Ṣādiq who said: 'The time gap between Jesus and Muḥammad was five hundred years. There was no prophet or manifest scholar during two hundred and fifty of these years'. Yaʿqūb ibn Shuʿayb says: 'I asked: "What religion did they (the people at the time) subscribe to?" The Imām replied: "They subscribed to the religion of Jesus." I asked: "What were they (in terms of religious categorization)?" The Imām replied: "They were believers (*muʾminīn*)." Then he said: "And it is not (permissible) save that there is a (hidden) scholar (*ʿālim*) during it (that is, during this time period)."'"[1]

Author's comment: The referent of the word 'scholar' (*ʿālim*) (in this report) is to the leader (*imām*) who is the proof (of God on earth).

There are reports transmitted with respect to *They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths but Allah will perfect His light, though the unbelievers may be averse* (61:9) and *He it is Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it overcome the religions, all of them, though the polytheists may be averse* (61:8) which mention that the meaning of the light, the guidance, and the religion of truth is Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAlī. Such reports are examples of the application (*al-jary wa al-taṭbīq*) of the verses' meaning to valid instances of it, or examples of the inner meaning (*al-baṭn*) of the verses and not in the meaning of commentary and elucidation of the verses (*al-tafsīr*). This is while reckoning the time period between Jesus and Muḥammad as consisting of five hundred years contradicts what is historically well-known (of this time period), however researchers have observed that there is confusion in the Christian calendar, and an indication of sorts has been made regarding that in the third part of the commentary.

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1 *Kamāl al-Dīn*, by means of his chain of transmission to him.

Verses 10-14

This section of the chapter bids the believers to believe in God and His Messenger, and to struggle in God's path. Consequently, it makes them a beautiful promise of forgiveness and paradise in the hereafter, and (divine) support and victory in this world. In addition, it summons the believers to be resolute and firm in their help to God, and makes them a beautiful promise of aid and support (in return).

These two themes are the ultimate goals of this chapter while the previous verses serve as a preamble to these two goals.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿١٠﴾

(61:10) O you who believe! Shall I lead you to merchandise which may deliver you from a painful chastisement?

The question in this verse is in the manner of a suggestion but is (actually) in the meaning of an imperative. The word *al-tijāra,* which occurs in this verse (and is translated as: merchandise), means: 'to invest capital (into something) in pursuit of profit' as mentioned by al-Rāghib. Furthermore, there cannot be found a word in the speech of the Arabs where the letter *ta'* is followed by the letter *jīm* save for in this word.

Thus, belief (in God and His Messenger) and struggle (in God's path) (both of which are mentioned in the next verse) are taken to represent merchandise mentioned in this verse whose capital is the (human) soul, and its profit is salvation from a painful punishment. Therefore this verse is in the meaning of the verse *Surely Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their property for this, that they shall have the garden* (*in return*)*; they fight in Allah's way, so they slay and are slain; a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Injīl and the Qur'an; and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Rejoice therefore in the bargain which you have made; and that is the mighty achievement* (9:111).

Further, God has aggrandized the significance of this merchandise where He says *...to merchandise...* meaning: "to merchandise that is great in terms of value, and sublime in terms of importance and significance," and He made the profit obtainable from it to be salvation from a painful punishment whose horror cannot be estimated.

The identity of this promised salvation (in this case) is forgiveness and paradise, which is why God substituted 'deliverance from painful chastisement', (mentioned in the current verse 61:10), with forgiveness and paradise in the second instance, in *He will forgive you your faults and cause you to enter gardens,*

beneath which rivers flow, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetuity; that is the mighty achievement (61:12). As for the promised divine support and victory (mentioned in 61:13), these two are excluded from the promised salvation, which is why God has separated their mention from that of forgiveness and paradise, and consequently said *And yet another* (*blessing*) *that you love: help from Allah and a victory near at hand* (61:13). So do not overlook this explanation!

تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

(61:11) You shall believe in Allah and His Messenger, and struggle hard in Allah's way with your property and your lives; that is better for you, if you knew!

This verse resumes the narrative of the previous verse in order to clarify it. It explains the merchandise suggested to them, as if the question were asked: What is this merchandise? To which the answer is given *You shall believe in Allah and His Messenger, and struggle hard in Allah's way with your property and your lives; that is better for you, if you knew!*

Here, belief in the Messenger of God is coupled with belief in God in order to prove and demonstrate the obligation of obeying the Messenger in what he instructs; for otherwise belief is not reckoned as belief in God save that it is coupled with belief in the Messengership of the Messenger of God. God says *Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and* (*those who*) *desire to make a distinction between Allah and His messengers and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others, and desire to take a course between* (*this and*) *that* (4:150). *These it is that are truly unbelievers, and We have prepared for the unbelievers a disgraceful chastisement* (4:151).

The concluding part ...*that is better for you, if you knew!* means that what is mentioned of belief and struggle is better for you all if you all were from those possessing knowledge. As for the ignorant, their deeds are not reckoned to be of any importance. It is also suggested that the end part of this verse means: "You would all know the goodness of that (that is, belief and struggle) if you were from the people of knowledge and understanding."

يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٢﴾

(61:12) He will forgive you your sins and cause you to enter gardens, beneath which rivers flow, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetuity; that is the mighty achievement;

This verse functions as the conclusion of a conditional statement, the beginning of which is inferred from the preceding verse. It's as though the earlier verse establishes the condition: If *you shall believe in Allah and His Messenger, and struggle hard in Allah's way with your property and your lives* (61:11). Then, the current verse presents the outcome: *He will forgive you your sins and cause you to enter gardens, beneath which rivers flow, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetuity; that is the mighty achievement* (being the conclusion of the conditional statement).

Thus the sins to which pertain forgiveness are absolutely all the sins without exception. Hence what is forgiven is the totality of the sins of a person, and careful consideration (of this verse) supports such an understanding. This is because this forgiveness serves as a prelude to entering eternal paradise. There would be no meaning to such a person entering paradise when some of his faults continued to exist as before. And perhaps it was to indicate just such a meaning that God followed up this point with the following speech in the subsequent part of this verse ...*and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetuity*... meaning: "well established, stable, durable, and perpetual gardens." Thus the described state of these gardens as being places of stability, durability, steadiness, constancy, and perpetuity suggests that the forgiveness is associated with or pertains to the totality of the sins of a person.

This is in addition to what the verse contains of a comparison of the spent human soul with the perpetual paradise. The former is a small possession that is expedited, while the latter is eternal. By such a comparison, the soul of a believer is rendered cheerful and wholesome, and its determination and resolve are strengthened in favor of exerting the soul and sacrificing it, and choosing eternity over extinction.

Thereafter, God adds to the verse, in affirmation of that, saying ...*that is the mighty achievement.*

وَأُخْرَىٰ تُحِبُّونَهَا ۖ نَصْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

(61:13) And yet another that you love: help from Allah and a victory near at hand; and give good news to the believers.

This verse occurs as a conjunction to the previous verse (which is *He will forgive you your sins and cause you to enter gardens....* (61:12)). This is while the word 'another' (*ukhrā*) (in *And yet another*...) is a description (or an adjective) that occurs, in this verse, in place of the thing (or noun) described (where the latter could be the noun *niʿmatun* (blessing) or *khaṣlatun* (characteristic) such as *niʿmatun ukhrā* (another blessing) or *khaṣlatun ukhrā* (another characteristic)), and it occurs as the delayed subject of an elided predicate brought forward (of

a nominal sentence). This is while the part of this verse that reads ...*help from Allah and a victory near at hand*... is an explanation and a clarification for the word 'another' (*ukhrā*) (in this verse). Therefore the implied meaning is: *And* for you all is *yet another* blessing or characteristic *that you love* (wa lakum niʿmatun aw khaṣlatun ukhrā tuḥibbūnahā)*:* which is *help from Allah and a victory near at hand,* which is anticipated and close at hand.

The concluding part ...*and give good news to the believers* occurs as a conjunction to the matter understood from the previous verses, as if it was said *O you who believe! Shall I lead you to merchandise...?* (61:10) *You shall believe in Allah and His Messenger, and struggle hard....* (61:11) He *will forgive you your sins and cause you to enter gardens...* (61:12) *And yet another that you love... ...and* (so) *give good news to the believers.*

The good news in this verse parallels the contents of the verse *Surely Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their property for this, that they shall have the garden* (*in return*)*; they fight in Allah's way, so they slay and are slain; a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Injīl and the Qur'an; and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Rejoice therefore in the bargain which you have made; and that is the mighty achievement* (9:111). This brings to light that what God instructed the people to be given good news of was the totality of what God had promised them of recompense, the hereafterly one and the worldly one and not just help and victory.

All this understanding, regarding the meaning of the verse, is what the literary context of the verse and the analysis of its parts grant. Other issues have been mentioned in respect of the meaning of this verse but the context does not support them in the same way, and so they have been placed aside and not mentioned. This is while it is also suggested that the part of this verse that says ...*and give good news to the believers* is a resumption of the narrative rather than a conjunction to it.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيِّينَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ ۖ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ ۖ فَآمَنَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَكَفَرَتْ طَائِفَةٌ ۖ فَأَيَّدْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَىٰ عَدُوِّهِمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا ظَاهِرِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

(61:14) O you who believe! Be helpers (in the cause) of Allah, as Jesus son of Mary said to (his) disciples: Who are my helpers in the cause of Allah? The disciples said: We are helpers (in the cause) of Allah. So a party of the children of Israel believed and another party disbelieved; then We aided those who believed against their enemy, and they became uppermost.

This verse means: 'characterise yourselves with this characteristic (which is that of being helpers in God's cause), and remain resolutely constant on it.' Thus this verse is in the meaning of a development or progression of a previous verse, which is *O you who believe! Shall I lead you to merchandise which may deliver you from a painful chastisement* (61:10)*?* The resultant meaning is: 'trade in or invest your souls and possessions, and thereby help God by means of faith and struggle in His way, and remain resolutely constant in helping Him.'

The meaning of the believers 'helping God' is to help His Prophet in traversing the path which he (the Prophet) traverses to God with certainty, sagacity and perception, as God says *Say: This is my way: I call to Allah, I and those who follow me being certain....* (12:108).

The evidence in favor of such an understanding for this verse is God's comparison (or parallelism) of the part of this verse which reads *O you who believe! Be helpers* (*in the cause*) *of Allah...* with the part of this very verse which says *...as Jesus son of Mary said to* (*his*) *disciples: Who are my helpers in the cause of Allah? The disciples said: We are helpers* (*in the cause*) *of Allah.* Thus Jesus' disciples being helpers of God means them being helpers of Jesus son of Mary in his traversing God's path and in his orienting himself towards God, which is monotheism and sincere worship of God.

Thus the placing of the part of this verse that conveys the disciples' response *We are helpers* (*in the cause*) *of Allah* alongside Jesus' question to them *Who are my helpers in the cause of Allah* and the conformity of the former to the latter necessitates that the meaning and intent of both statements is the same. Therefore the addressees in this verse *O you who believe! Be helpers* (*in the cause*) *of Allah...* being helpers of God, means them being helpers of the Prophet in propagating the prophetic mission and raising aloft the truth by means of struggle, which is belief in the Prophet and obeying him in what he commands and prohibits by way of decisive speech and sincere acts as is understood from the (literary) context of the verses of this chapter.

The statement, *So a party of the children of Israel believed and another party disbelieved; then We aided those who believed against their enemy, and they became uppermost* indicates what happened and what was the end result of Jesus' seeking help and the positive response of the disciples who consented, where the people were divided into two groups: a believing party and a disbelieving party. And God aided the believers over their enemies who were the disbelievers. Thus the former became uppermost after they had been disregarded, undervalued, and downtrodden.

Thus the narrative in this verse hints that what happened in the community of Jesus will also happen in the community of the Prophet Muḥammad. A

party shall believe and another shall disbelieve. So if the believers shall respond to the Prophet's call for help—and God placed Himself in place of the Prophet when seeking help in order to render the Prophet's matter great, and in order to demonstrate His fondness for him—God shall help them over their enemies and they shall become uppermost just as Jesus' helpers and those who believed in him became uppermost due to God's help.

God has mentioned this story at the end of the narrative of Jesus in Sūrah Āl-i ʿImrān where he says *But when Jesus perceived unbelief on their part, he said Who will be my helpers in Allah's way? The disciples said: We are helpers* (*in the way*) *of Allah: We believe in Allah and bear witness that we are submitting ones* (3:52). This narrative continues to the end of six verses and careful contemplation on these verses will allow the meaning of the verse subject to study here, to become clear.

Examining Narrations

(1) Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir said the following regarding the verse *O you who believe! Shall I lead you to merchandise which may deliver you from a painful chastisement?* (61:10). They said: 'if we knew what it (the merchandise) is, we would definitely expend our wealth, souls, and children liberally for it, and spare no effort regarding it', whereupon God said: *You shall believe in Allah and His Messenger, and struggle hard in Allah's way with your property and your lives; that is better for you, if you knew* (61:11).[1]

Author's comment: This meaning for the verse has been transmitted from Sunni chains of transmission too.

(2) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* explains verse *And yet another that you love: help from Allah and a victory near at hand; and give good news to the believers* as follows (61:13): It means: '(help from God) in this world by means of the victory of the one who will rise (*al-qāʾim*).' This commentary also gives an alternative explanation, saying: '(it means) the conquest and victory of Mecca.'

(3) Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAlī said: 'He (God) did not leave His earth devoid of a scholar (who possessed knowledge) of what the creation needed, and a student (who studied) in the path of salvation. Those are very few in number indeed. God has demonstrated that by means of the community of the prophets. He rendered them exemplars for those who were to come after, such as His words regarding Jesus' disciples when he (Jesus) asked all the Children of Israel ...*Who will be my helpers*

1 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, in the transmission of Abū al-Jārūd, from him.

in Allah's way? The disciples said: We are helpers (*in the way*) *of Allah: We believe in Allah and* (*you*) *bear witness that we are submitting ones* (3:52). It means (they) submit/surrender to those endowed with (God's) grace and favors, and they are not haughty and arrogant regarding the command of their Lord. None responded to him (to Jesus) save his disciples.'[1]

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Author's comment: This report occurs in the context of the commentary of 3:52, however it is also useful to cite it here.

(4) ʿAbdullāh ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAmr ibn Ḥazm relates: 'The Messenger of God said to the individuals who met him at al-ʿAqaba: "Nominate twelve men from yourselves (as leaders), who shall be responsible for their communities just as Jesus' disciples guaranteed to Jesus son of Mary."'[2]

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1 *Al-Iḥtijāj*, from him.

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Saʿd, from him.

Chapter 62

Sūrah Al-Jumuʿah (The Friday)

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

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Introduction

The aim of this chapter is heightened encouragement in favor of the Friday ritual prayer (*ṣalāt al-jumuʿa*) and its performance. This is because the Friday ritual prayer is from the great and valuable divine rituals, honoring and paying attention to which carries worldly and hereafterly well-being for the Muslims. God proceeds to enunciate His teaching (regarding the Friday ritual prayer) in this chapter by beginning the chapter with His praise and glorification. This is due to Him having had favored and blessed an unlettered people with an unlettered messenger from among themselves; one who recites to them His verses, purifies them by means of virtuous deeds and purifying morals, teaches them the book and wisdom thereby charging them with the book of God and the knowledge of His religion in the best manner possible; them and those of the believers who would come after them. Thus (the implied message is)—let them (that is, those charged, (the Muslims)) carry this charge in the best manner possible and let them beware of becoming like the Jews who were charged with the Torah but who did not carry its teachings, knowledge, and rules (as it deserved), and consequently became like donkeys carrying books!

Then finally, God arrives at the instruction (to the Muslims) to leave off trade and to hasten to the remembrance of God when the call is made for the ritual prayer on Friday. He (further) rebukes the Muslims for abandoning the Prophet while he was standing preaching to them (on Friday prior to the ritual prayer) as they broke up and scattered off, rushing to trade and amusement. That was a sign of their failure to carry the responsibility of the teachings and rules of God's book, which they were charged with.

This chapter is of Medinan provenance.

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Verses 1-8

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوسِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿١﴾

(62:1) Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth declares the glory of Allah, the King, the Holy, the Mighty, the Wise.

The word *al-tasbīḥ* means "considering or declaring something transcendent, and ascribing it to purity and integrity from defects, faults, and shortcomings (thereby declaring it to be free of or transcending every impurity, imperfection, and everything derogatory; glorifying and exalting it above what is imputed to it of imperfection)." The expression of this concept in this verse by means of the present tense verb *yusabbiḥu* indicates continuity. This is while the word *al-malik* (the King) means "the authority and specialization to control and govern a social system," and the word *al-quddūs* (the Holy), which is an exaggerated form of the word *al-quds,* means "transcendence and purity." The word *al-ʿazīz* (the Mighty) is a reference to one whom no conqueror conquers or overcomes, and (finally) the word *al-ḥakīm* (the Wise) is a reference to one who is perfect in his deeds and so does not do anything aimlessly or due to ignorance.

This verse serves as evidentiary introduction to what the next verse says, which is *He it is Who raised among the unlettered ones, a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, although they were before certainly in clear error* (62:2). 62:1 serves as evidentiary introduction to 62:2 for what 62:2 says regarding the sending forth of the Messenger (Muḥammad), which was for the sake of perfecting humankind, rendering them happy and blessed, and guiding them after they had been in manifest error.

This is as follows: The existents of the heavens and the earth glorify and declare God transcendent due to what they themselves suffer, of deficiency and imperfection, which He completes and perfects, as well as what they suffer of needs, which He fulfils. Thus there is no deficiency or imperfection save that it is anticipated and expected that He shall complete and perfect it, and there is no need save that it is anticipated and expected that He shall fulfil it. Consequently, He is the one glorified, praised, and declared transcendent of every deficiency, imperfection, and need. Therefore, it is His prerogative to rule and hold sway over the system of creation as He wishes, and it is His prerogative to administer, regulate, and hold sway over the system of legislation among His servants as He intends. Why not? When He is the King (*al-malik*)! It is His prerogative to reign over those who exist in His realm while it is their duty to obey Him.

Thus when He decreed and enacted a religion for them, it was not due to His need of their worship of Him or due to a deficiency in Him which He sought to complete by means of their worship of Him. This is because He is pure, transcendent, and free of every defect and need (*al-quddūs*). Yet when He decreed and enacted a religion and conveyed it to them in particular, while He was in no need of doing so, and He called them to it by means of His messengers, they (His creatures) did not respond to His call positively, rather they

disobeyed and revolted against His obedience. But that was not due to them rendering Him incapable and helpless! This is because He is unconquerable, powerful, and mighty (*al-ʿazīz*). No vanquisher can overcome Him as he likes!

Moreover, what He decreed and enacted of a religion, since He is the king (*al-malik*), the pure, the transcendent (*al-quddūs*), and the mighty (*al-ʿazīz*), is not void, erroneous, frivolous, or ineffectual, for He is absolutely wise and perfect (*al-ḥakīm*). Whatever He does is but for a benefit and an advantage (for His creatures), nor does He demand from His creatures what He demands of them save for a benefit that returns to them, and for the goodness that they partake of, due to which their conditions and circumstances become upright in this world and in the hereafter.

In sum total, His enacting a religion and revealing the book by means of a messenger who conveys it to His creatures by reciting out to them His verses, and purifies them and teaches them, is a favor from Him and a grace, just as He says *He it is Who raised among the unlettered ones, a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, although they were before certainly in clear error* (62:2). (Consequently, He is the one glorified, praised, and declared transcendent of every deficiency, imperfection, and need, and most worthy and deserving of such glory and praise).

هُوَ الَّذِی بَعَثَ فِی الْأُمِّیِّینَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ یَتْلُو عَلَیْهِمْ آیَاتِهِ وَیُزَکِّیهِمْ وَیُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْکِتَابَ وَالْحِکْمَةَ وَإِنْ کَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِی ضَلَالٍ مُبِینٍ ﴿٢﴾

(62:2) He it is Who raised among the unlettered ones, a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, and they were before certainly in clear error.

The word *ummiyyīn* in this verse is the plural of *ummiyy*, which means "one who does not read and write," which is understood to refer to the Arabs according to one suggestion. This is due to the paucity of those among them who could read and write. The Prophet Muḥammad was from them, which means he was from their kind and race (*jins*) (that is, from the Arab race), but that does not mean he was sent (only) to them for (in fact) he was from them but sent to the *entirety* of mankind.

It is held that the word *ummiyyīn* refers to people who do not have a revealed scripture and therefore are not of the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitab*), such as what God recounts (in the Qur'an) the Jews to have said (regarding them) ...*this is because they say: There is not upon us in the matter of the* ummiyyīn *any way* (*to reproach*)*; and they tell a lie against Allah while they know* (3:75).

However, such identification for the word *ummiyyīn* does not sit well with the part of 62:2 which reads *...who recites to them His communications...* (for it would mean that the Prophet recited God's communications only to people who do not have a revealed scripture) while the Prophet did not specify the non-Arabs and those who did not have a revealed scripture with any part of his call that he did not also present to them (that is, to the Arabs and the People of the Book).

It is also held that the word *ummiyyīn* refers to the Meccans because they (the Arabs at the time) used to call Mecca '*umm al-qurā*' (mother (or centre) of villages/small towns), however this identification does not sit well with the Medinan provenance of this chapter for it misleadingly renders the two plural suffix pronouns *him* and *hum* (meaning: them) (in *yuzakkīhim* (purifies *them*) and *yu'allimuhum* (teaches *them*)) as appertaining to the Meccan emigrants, and whoever became Muslim from the Meccans after the conquest of Mecca, and those after them, which is far from Qur'anic sentiment.

There is no contradiction between the Prophet Muḥammad being from the unlettered ones, raised among them, and being sent to them and to others, which is clear. This is while his reciting to them God's communications and purifying and teaching them the book and wisdom was due to its revelation in their language, which was the first stage of the Prophet's mission. Thereafter, when his mission and call became established to an extent, the Prophet began to call the Jews, the Christians, and the Magians, and wrote letters to kings and chiefs.

The supplication of Abraham and Ishmael, which God narrates in the Qur'an, is likewise: *Our Lord! And make us both submissive to Thee and* (*raise*) *from our offspring a nation submitting to Thee* (2:128). *Our Lord! And raise up in them a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them; surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise* (2:129) in that it includes the totality of Ishmael's descendants from the Arabs of the Muḍar, which is more general and encompassing than the inhabitants of Mecca and beyond them, and it does not contradict him being sent to them and to others.

The statement, *...who recites to them His communications...* means the communications of God's book, despite the Prophet being unlettered, which serves as a description or attribute of the Prophet. The next part of this verse reads *...and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom...* The word *al-tazkiya* is a verbal noun of the second form of Arabic verbal forms and is (derived) from *al-zakāh*, which means "wholesome, pure, and righteous growth and development which accompanies goodness and blessings." Thus the Prophet's purification of them means his causing their growth and

development, one that is wholesome, pure, and righteous, which he does by habituating them to virtuous morals and righteous deeds, thereby allowing them to complete and perfect their humanity, and thereby rendering their worldly and hereafterly situation upright and wholesome, allowing them to live a blessed life and die a blessed death.

'Teaching the book' means enunciating the words that constitute its verses, and explaining and interpreting what is ambiguous and obscure of these verses. Corresponding to it is the teaching of wisdom which is the actual and real knowledge contained in the Qur'an. This is while expressing the Qur'an at times by using the word 'communications' (*āyāt*) and at other times by the word 'the book' (*al-kitāb*) is in order to indicate that the Qur'an is, by means of both these expressions, a blessing and a boon that God has granted—as it is suggested.

In 62:2, mention of 'wholesome and pure growth and development' (*al-tazkiya*) precedes mention of 'teaching the book and wisdom' (*ta'līm al-kitāb wa al-ḥikma*). This is in contrast to how their sequence occurs in Abraham's supplication in (2:129). The reason for the difference is because 62:2 describes the Prophet's act of nurturing and bringing up the believers who make up his community. Purification takes precedence in the process of nurturing and upbringing to teaching true knowledge and wisdom. As for Abraham's supplication, it is an invocation where he beseeches that such purity and wholesome growth, as well as knowledge of the book and wisdom take place or is actualized and comes true in his progeny. At the stage of actualization and characterization, knowledge and wisdom take precedence in terms of order, and are superior in terms of degree to purity and wholesome growth, which refers to deeds and morals.

The concluding statement *...and they were before certainly in clear error* (*wa in kānū min qablu lafī ḍalālin mubīn*) has the particle *in* at its inception. It is the contracted form of *inna*, (in terms of pronunciation, and has the effect of lending emphasis to the context). The purport is to convey that 'they *certainly* were, before the sending forth of the Messenger, in clear error'. Thus this verse serves as praise after the glorification (in the first verse) and it occurs in the context of invoking gratitude as it shall soon be made clear.

وَآخَرِينَ مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣﴾

(63:3) And others from among them who have not yet joined them; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

This verse is a conjunction to the previous verse where it is understood to join it after the mention of 'the unlettered ones'. The masculine third person plural pronominal suffix *hum* (them) in *minhum* (from among them) refers to the *ummiyyīn*—unlettered ones—while the preposition *min* (from) has the

meaning of partitiveness (*al-tabʿīḍ*—denoting something being a part of something or part of a whole). Hence the meaning obtained is: "*He it is Who raised among the unlettered ones* (62:2), *and among others from among them* (that is, from among the unlettered ones) *who have not yet joined them, and He is the Mighty* who is not overcome in His intentions and desires, *the Wise* who does not act foolishly or aimlessly."[1]

ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٤﴾

(62:4) That is Allah's grace; He grants it to whom He pleases, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.

The masculine singular demonstrative pronoun *dhālika* (that) at the beginning of this verse refers to the sending forth of the Messenger Muḥammad (mentioned in 62:2-3). God has aggrandized the matter of the sending forth of the Prophet by using the demonstrative pronoun *dhālika* (that), which is a demonstrative pronoun of distance. Thus the Prophet Muḥammad is rendered special by 'God's grace'. And so, the meaning of this verse is: "that sending forth of the Messenger where he recites God's communications, purifies mankind, and teaches them the book and wisdom is from God's grace and His bestowal. He bestows it on whomsoever His wills, and He willed to bestow it on Muḥammad, and God is the possessor of mighty grace." This is how the Qur'an commentators have explained this verse.

But it is possible that the reference of the demonstrative pronoun *dhālika* in this verse, while being a reference to the matter of the sending forth of the messenger, is in respect of the relationship the phenomenon of 'the sending forth' has with its terminal points, in the meaning of 'the one sent forth as a messenger (*al-mursal*)' and 'those to whom the messenger was sent (*al-mursal ilayhim*)'. Consequently, the meaning of this verse would be: 'that sending forth of the Messenger where he recites God's communications, purifies mankind, and teaches them the book and wisdom is from the grace of God. He grants it to whoever He wishes and He wished to favor Muḥammad with this grace, and so He chose him as a messenger sent forth (*al-mursal*), and He chose to favor his (Muḥammad's) community with this grace, and so chose them for that. Consequently, He rendered the Prophet from among them and sent him

1 Translator's Note: Thus these two verses together are to be understood as follows: *He it is Who raised among the unlettered ones* (62:2) (And (among) others from among the unlettered ones who have not yet joined them; and He is the Mighty, the Wise (62:3)), *a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, and they were before certainly in clear error* (62:2).

to them (*al-mursal ilayhim*)'.

This verse and the two verses preceding it (that is, 62:2-4 altogether) occur in the context of invoking gratitude.

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَاةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا ۚ بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝٥

(62:5) The likeness of those who were charged with the Torah, then they did not observe it, is as the likeness of the ass bearing books, evil is the likeness of the people who belie the communications of Allah; and Allah does not guide the unjust people.

Al-Rāghib writes that the word *al-safr,* when spelt thus, means 'removing the cover or the veil; unveiling/uncovering/stripping off, and it pertains to (certain acts of) the nobles (or to those who belong to the upper echelons of society) such as (a man) unwinding or stripping off the turban from the head (thereby uncovering it) or (a woman) removing the veil from the face (thereby uncovering it)'. He then writes: This is while the word *al-sifr* (pl: *al-asfār,* which is the word that occurs in this verse), when spelt thus, means the book which uncovers the realities (or brings them to light) or unveils the truth (thereby bringing it to light)'. (Al-Rāghib then cites 62:5 as a relevant example of this word as follows): God says *...is as the likeness of the ass bearing books* (*asfārā*)*...*

The phrase *...charged with the Torah...* in this verse means "(charged with) its teachings" while the meaning of the part of this verse that says *... observe it...* means "to act on it" in light of what the context advocates (and so therefore *then they did not observe it* means "then they did not act on it" (that is, on its teachings)). This meaning is also attested by the part of this verse that says *...evil is the likeness of the people who belie the communications of Allah...* The identity of *...those who were charged with the Torah, then they did not observe it* is the Jews. God revealed the Torah to their messenger Moses who taught them its contents, consisting of wisdom and laws, but they abandoned the Torah and did not act according to it. Thus they were charged with the Torah but they did not observe it and as a result God struck a simile about them which is that they were like a donkey carrying books. The donkey does not know what the books contain of knowledge, wisdom, and realities. Thus it does not gain anything from carrying them save fatigue due to the burden of its weight.

The perspective by which this verse is related to the verses before it is as follows: God began His speech (at the beginning of this chapter) by mentioning His favors to the Muslims, which was sending forth an unlettered prophet from among the unlettered ones who recites to them the verses of His book, purifies them, and teaches them the book and wisdom, thereby drawing them

out from the darkness of misguidance to the light of guidance, and from the depths of ignorance to the apex of knowledge and wisdom. (This was similar to how He had sent the Prophet Moses to his own people (the Israelites/Jews) with the Torah.) And then at the end of this chapter, God mentions His rebuke and censure of what the Muslims had done in terms of breaking up and scattering off, rushing to trade and amusement while the Prophet was standing preaching to them on Friday; an act which constituted underestimating and belittling what was one of the greatest religious rituals, and manifested that the Muslims did not appreciate it as it deserved nor did they give it its due (which resembled what the Jews had done in terms of failing to observe the teachings of the Torah and belying it).

And so therefore, God objected to that (deed of the Muslims) by means of this simile, and reminded the Muslims of the condition of the Jews whence they were charged with the Torah but then did not bear its responsibility well. Thus they proved to be like donkeys carrying books, and they did not benefit from what was in it of knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, it was incumbent on the Muslims to pay attention to and to take care of the matters of their faith, and to fear God in every situation; to esteem, revere, and honor His Messenger and not to belittle or underestimate the teachings he came forth with. Further, they should beware that they may come to merit God's wrath as did the Jews when the latter failed to act on what they knew (just as the Muslims had failed to appreciate and honor the teaching of the Friday ritual prayer, *ṣalāt al-jumuʿa*). Consequently, God labelled the Jews ignorant and oppressive and likened them to donkeys carrying books.

On the other hand, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī* (al-Ālūsī) is of the opinion that the perspective by which this verse is related to those preceding it is in the allusion it contains to the messenger sent forth by God. God had sent him forth with what He had described him in the Torah and on the tongues of the prophets of the Children of Israel, as if it was said: 'God is the One who sent forth the one foretold in the Torah, the one described in it as an unlettered prophet sent to an unlettered people, hence the similitude of one who came to know the prophet's description in the Torah and recognized him but then did not believe in him (thereby belying him), is as the similitude of the donkey (carrying books)'. This is where his interpretation terminates and you (the reader) are proficient enough to judge how arbitrary this interpretation is at best, and has no basis from the point of view of the context.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ هَادُوا إِنْ زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ لِلَّهِ مِنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٦﴾

(62:6) Say: O you who are Jews, if you think that you are the favorites of Allah to the exclusion of other people, then invoke death If you are truthful.

This verse serves as a remonstration against the Jews; a remonstration by which the falsity of their claim becomes apparent. This was the claim that they were the favorites of God and His beloveds. God has related their speech in the Qur'an which demonstrates such a belief among them, such as *And the Jews and the Christians say: We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones* (5:18). *Say: If the future abode with Allah is especially for you to the exclusion of the people...* (2:94) (which suggests that such a view was prevalent among them). *And they say: None shall enter the garden* (*or paradise*) *except he who is a Jew or a Christian* (2:111).

Thus the meaning of this verse is that the Prophet is instructed: 'Say to the Jews, addressing them: "O Jews, if you truly believe that you are the favorites of God to the exclusion of all mankind, and if you are truthful in your claim, then invoke/desire death."' This is because one, who loves another, desires to meet the latter; a lover always desires to meet his/her beloved. And whoever is certain that he is the beloved of God undoubtedly deserves paradise (which metaphorically represents meeting God), and the only obstacle between him and paradise (or meeting God) is death. Such a person (therefore) loves death and desires that it overtakes him so that he may enter the abode of dignity and esteem (that is, the abode of paradise and the abode of the meeting with God) and be rid of this world which only consists of troubles, sorrows, misfortunes, and adversities.

It is suggested that the manner in which this verse mentions "the favorites of God" in Arabic, which is by means of the phrase *awliyā'u lillāhi* (literally: favorites for God) rather than by means of a possessive construct phrase, which would be *awliyā'ullāhi* (literally: favorites of God/God's favorites) indicates that their statement was a mere claim from them without any reality (or support from God).

وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٧﴾

(62:7) And they will never invoke it because of what their hands have sent before; and Allah is Cognizant of the unjust.

In this verse, God informs His Prophet, after having had instructed him to propose to them (that is, his Jewish interlocutors)[1] to invoke death that they will never ever invoke death. God has explained the reason they will never invoke

1 The pronoun "they" in the verse refers to those Jews who were the addressee of the verse at the time of the Holy Prophet and not all the Jews. (Ed.)

death, and that reason is *...what their hands have sent before...* which is a reference to oppression, injustice, and evil. Thus this verse means: "They will never ever invoke/desire death due to what their hands had sent forth of oppression and injustice. So they were unjust and oppressive while God is cognizant of the unjust. He knows that they do not desire meeting Him for they are His enemies and there is no friendship or love lost between them."

Verses 62:6 and 62:7 are in the meaning of the following two verses, respectively. *Say: If the future abode with Allah is especially for you to the exclusion of the people, then invoke death if you are truthful* (2:94); *And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have sent before, and Allah knows the unjust* (2:95).

قُلْ إِنَّ الْمَوْتَ الَّذِي تَفِرُّونَ مِنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مُلَاقِيكُمْ ۖ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾

(62:8) Say: (As for) the death from which you flee, that will surely overtake you, then you shall be sent back to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, and He will inform you of that which you did.

The letter *fa* in *fa-innahu mulāqīkum* (that will surely overtake you) indicates that (the ensuing phrase) is the outcome of a conditional sentence (*jawāb al-sharṭ*), implying a threat to them (the Jews) in that the death which they abhor so utterly, detesting it for it would lead to their punishment, (a punishment) occasioned by their evil deeds, will surely and undoubtedly overtake them. Then they will be sent back to their Lord, the One from whose worship and obedience they had strayed due to their injustice, the One whom they had opposed by their deeds while He knew well the reality of their deeds, the apparent of it and the hidden of it. This is because He is the knower of the unseen and seen. Consequently, He will inform them of the reality of their deeds, and its evil consequences, which are the different forms of punishments.

Thus this verse declares several things to them (the Jews). First, it declares to them that their attempt at fleeing death is an error for it will certainly meet and overtake them. Second, their detesting God's meeting is another error for they shall undoubtedly be returned to Him and shall be subjected to accountability for their evil deeds, and third, God does not have anything hidden from Him of their deeds, its apparent or hidden aspects while their deception does not overwhelm or fool Him for He is the knower of the unseen and the seen!

Therefore, this verse points to several things. First it points to the fact that death is true and inevitable just as God says *Every soul must taste of death...* (21:35) and as He says *We have ordained death among you and We are not to be overcome...* (56:60). Second, returning to God to give an account of deeds done is true, and there is no doubt in it. Third, they shall be informed of the reality of

their deeds and they shall be made to pay for it in full. Fourth, nothing of their deeds is hidden from God, and in order to emphasize and point it out, God's name of majesty (*Allah*) (which occurs in the previous verse) was substituted for the phrase *...the Knower of the unseen and the seen...*

Examining Narrations

(1) Imām al-Ṣādiq said the following regarding the part of 62:2 that says *He it is Who raised among the unlettered ones* (ummiyyīn)*, a Messenger from among themselves* (62:2): 'They (the Arabs) used to write, however they did not have a (divine) scripture from God (sent to them), nor was a (divine) messenger sent forth to them and so therefore God ascribed them to the *ummiyyīn*.'[1],[2]

(2) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* explains verse *And others from among them who have not yet joined them; and He is the Mighty, the Wise* (62:3) as referring to: 'Those who entered the Muslim faith after them'.

(3) *Majmaʿ al-bayān*: 'The Prophet recited this verse (that is, 62:3) and so was asked: "Who are these people?" He placed his hand on Salmān's shoulder and said: "If faith were located in the Pleiades, men from these (that is, from the people of Salmān) would obtain it!"'

Author's comment: This report is related in the Qur'an commentary *Al-Durr al-manthūr* from several hadith collections such as that of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nasā'ī, from Abū Hurayra, from the Prophet. The report says: 'Then he (that is, the Prophet) placed his hand on Salmān the Persian's head and said: "I swear by the One in whose grasp lies my soul, if knowledge were located in the Pleiades, men from these (that is, from the people of Salmān) would obtain it."'

(4) Qays ibn Saʿd ibn ʿUbāda narrated: 'The Messenger of God said: "If faith were located in the Pleiades men from the Persians would obtain it."'[3]

(5) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* explains the verse *The likeness of those who were charged with the Torah, then they did not observe it, is as the likeness of*

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1 Translator's note: The word *ummiyy*/*ummiyyīn* has been translated here as 'unlettered', meaning one who does not read and write, which is also the preferred understanding of the word for the author, however, this report appears to identify the word with 'people who do not have a revealed scripture and therefore are not of the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitab*).'

2 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, on the authority of his father, from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, from Muʿāwiyah ibn ʿAmmār, from him.

3 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Saʿīd ibn Manṣūr and Ibn Mardawayhi, from him.

the ass bearing books, evil is the likeness of the people who belie the communications of Allah; and Allah does not guide the unjust people (62:5) as follows: 'Donkeys carry books but they do not know what is in them, nor do they act on what is in them. Such were the Israelites. They had borne (the Torah) like the donkeys but they knew not what was in it nor did they act on what was in it!'

(6) Ibn 'Abbās narrates: 'The Messenger of God said: "Whoever talks on Friday while the ritual prayer leader is delivering the (Friday) sermon is ...*as the likeness of the ass bearing books...* (62:5) and the one who reprimands him (to keep quiet and pay attention to the sermon), saying 'listen and pay attention!' does not have the Friday (ritual prayer) to his credit!"'[1]

Author's comment: This report corroborates what we have explained regarding how this verse relates to those before it.

(7) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* has the following information with respect to the verse *Say: O you who are Jews, if you think that you are the favorites of Allah to the exclusion of other people, then invoke death If you are truthful*)62:6(: 'It is written in the Torah that the friends and beloveds of God desire death'.

(8) Imām al-Ṣādiq narrates: 'A man came to Abū Dharr and asked him: "Abū Dharr, what is the matter with us that we detest death?" He replied: "That is because you have developed this world and ruined the hereafter. Thus you hate to move from what is developed to what is ruined!"'[2]

Essay on the Meaning of 'Teaching Wisdom'

There is no escape for the human being in following traditions and observing norms and conventions in his limited life, which he lives in this world, in regards to what he likes and dislikes. He proceeds in accordance with these traditions, norms, and conventions in every situation; in short, in all his endeavours in life.

These traditions, norms, and conventions reflect, with respect to their type, the human being's opinion and understanding of the reality of the cosmos and that of his soul, and the relationship between the two. This is corroborated by what we observe of the differences in traditions, norms, and conventions among different peoples due to the differences in their opinions of the reality of the

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Abī Shaybah and al-Ṭabarānī, from him.

2 *Al-Kāfī*, by means of his chain of transmission terminating at 'Abdullāh ibn Sinān, from him.

origin of existence and that of the human being who is a part of it.

Thus we observe two broad groups of people. The first is that of those who do not believe that there is existence beyond the material. They restrict existence to the tangible and the material, and consider life to be a coincidence and due to chance. They view the human being as a material composite, with a limited life extending between birth and death. They do not consider happiness except in the material. They have no ultimate goal in what they do save material merit in the form of wealth, children, social rank, and things similar to these. They have no desire save enjoyment of the pleasures of this world and triumph by means of its material delights or what boils down to these, while for them, everything comes to an end at death which is, for them, a disintegration of the composite, and nullification.

The second group is that of those who believe that the existence of the cosmos is due to a cause that is beyond it and transcends matter, and that beyond this worldly abode exists another abode, and after this world there is a hereafter. We find members of this group differing in their traditions, norms, and conventions from that of the previous one. They have in mind, when doing (various) deeds, the bliss of the hereafter, beyond the happiness of this world. The form of their deeds, their goals and ambitions, their views and opinions differ from that of the first group.

The traditions, norms, and conventions of the members of this latter group differ among themselves too, due to the differences that exist between them such as the traditions, norms, and conventions of the polytheists from the Brahmins and the Buddhists and others, and those of the followers of heavenly scriptures from the Magians, Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Thus each has a course and a direction that it follows.

In short, a follower of heavenly scripture observes the eternal hereafterly aspect, in his endeavours, for (the benefit of) his soul. He concedes to opinions and views which conform to that aspect such as his belief in the necessity for the human being to prepare provisions for the abode of eternity, the necessity to turn towards his lord, and the necessity not to exceed the limits in his preoccupation with what the life of this transient world throws at him. This is while one who does not follow a heavenly scripture, one who is subservient to the material, inclines to its opposite. All this is without doubt.

However, since the human being, due to his material nature, is bound to and held hostage by the material world, vacillating between apparent causes, interacting with them, reacting to them, continuously being impelled from one cause to another, having no respite from that, comes to imagine that truth and reality belong to this worldly limited life. That life itself, and the goals and merits

that pertain to it, are the ultimate purpose and utmost aim of his existence and that it is necessary for him to strive hard in order to obtain its bliss and happiness.

Thus (the human being comes to hold that) the life of this world is the actual life and what its people have of possessions, blessings, boons, power, and might are exactly that in the true sense of the word while what its people consider as poverty, destitution, privation, weakness, indignity, calamity, misfortune, and loss are exactly that. In short, whatever the human soul desires of hastened goodness or limited benefit becomes for such a person absolute goodness and absolute benefit, and whatever the human soul does not desire becomes evil and harmful.

Thus one who does not follow a heavenly scripture proceeds in accordance with this viewpoint and is oblivious to anything beyond it while one who is a follower of a heavenly scripture proceeds in accordance with it in terms of deeds but admits to and acknowledges its contrary, in word, and so such a person continues to be in a state of struggle due to the tension that exists between his speech and deeds. God says:*...whenever it shines on them, they walk in it, and when it becomes dark to them they stand still...*(2:20).

This is while what the Muslim faith calls to (or charges mankind with), in regards to beliefs and deeds, is what conforms to the demands of the innate human nature (*al-fiṭra*) on which the human being is formed and on which his creation and nature is established, as God says *Then set your face upright for religion in the right state—the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion...*(30:30)

It is well-known that the innate human nature (*al-fiṭra*) does not guide or call to knowledge nor does it incline to a deed save that there is in it actual perfection and true happiness and felicity for it. Thus whatever it guides or calls to in terms of primary beliefs regarding the beginning and end (of existence), and the ramifications of these primary beliefs in terms of opinions and secondary beliefs, is true knowledge and opinion, which does not transgress human felicity, and the same is true with respect to what it inclines to of deeds.

This is the reason God has named this religion (that is, the religion of Islam), which is founded on the innate human nature (*al-fiṭra*), the true religion/religion of truth (*al-dīn al-ḥaqq/ dīn al-ḥaqq*), which He does at different places in the Qur'an such as in *He it is Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the true religion...*(61:9), and He said in the Qur'an, which comprises His call ... *guiding to the truth...*(46:30)

Truth is nought save the opinion and belief to which reality conforms and which right guidance and rationality, devoid of error and sin, accompany. This is wisdom—that is, the opinion which is perfect, accurate, and consolidated in

its truth such that falsehood does not permeate it, and it is perfect, accurate, and consolidated in its benefit such that harm and loss do not follow it. God has mentioned His call in the Qur'an as being one that comprises wisdom such as *...and Allah has revealed to you the Book and the wisdom...*(4:113) and has described His revealed speech by it (saying) *I swear by the Qur'an full of wisdom...*(36:2) and has deemed His messenger a teacher of wisdom at several places in the Qur'an such as in *He it is Who raised among the unlettered ones, a Messenger... who teaches them the Book and the Wisdom....*(62:2)

The Qur'anic teachings, which the Messenger of God was made responsible for, and applied himself to, clarifying what was revealed from God of the teaching of wisdom and its significance, are an elucidation or clarification of what is right and true regarding false and fabricated principles of beliefs, which have crept into the perception of mankind regarding existence and regarding the reality of the human being who is a part of it. This was pointed out above. The Qur'anic teachings are also an elucidation of what is right and true regarding the secondary beliefs that ensue from the primary principles, which form the basis of human acts and the focus of the intentions and goals of those acts.

For example, human beings think that truth and reality belong to their material life so much so that one of the adherents of this notion is reported to say *...There is nothing but our life in this world; we live and die and nothing destroys us but time...*(45:24) while the Qur'an reminds them by means of its speech *And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play; and as for the next abode, that most surely is the life—did they but know!* (29:64)

Human beings think that (material) causes and means generate events and occurrences that dominate this material life such as life, death, health, sickness, affluence, poverty, blessings, wretchedness, sustenance, and privation *...Nay, (it was) planning by night and day...*(34:33) but the Qur'an reminds mankind *...surely His is the creation and the command...*(7:54) and *...judgment/decision belongs only to Allah...*(12:67) and other such wise verses.

Human beings think that they possess independence with respect to their volition. They can do whatever they want but the Qur'an critiques their notion by saying *And you do not please except that Allah pleases...*(76:30)

Human beings think that it is up to them to obey and comply and disobey and refuse, to guide, and to be rightly guided, but the Qur'an notifies them by its speech *Surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases, and He knows best the followers of the right way* (28:56).

Human beings think that power belongs to them but the Qur'an refutes that by its speech *...that the power is wholly Allah's....*(2:165) They think that might and glory is theirs by means of wealth, children, and helpers but the

Qur'an judges contrary to that by its speech *Do they seek honor from them? Then surely all honor is for Allah* (4:139) and *...and to Allah belongs might and to His Messenger and to the believers...*(63:8)

They think that being killed in God's service is death, annihilation, and non-existence while the Qur'an deems it life when it states *And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead; nay, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive* (2:154) and other such Qur'anic teachings which the Prophet was instructed to call mankind to. God says *Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom* (16:125).

These Qur'anic teachings are knowledge and opinions in abundance and they are beautiful, which the worldly life has portrayed contrary to, in the mind and soul of mankind. Consequently, God pointed this knowledge out in His book and instructed His messenger to teach it while He charged the believers to enjoin each other in its favor as He said *Most surely man is in loss. Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience* (103:2-3). And God said *He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good and none but men of understanding mind* (2:269).

Thus the Qur'an, in fact, moulds the human being in a novel mould, from the perspective of knowledge and deeds, and shapes the human being in a new form. Consequently, the Qur'an enlivens the human being into a life which is not followed by death ever! It is to this that the following verse points *O you who believe! Answer (the call of) Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life....*(8:24) and verse *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?* (6:122)

We have explained the aspect of wisdom in every verse of wisdom, when engaged in its exegesis, to the measure of the scope of the discussion in this book.

From the foregoing, the invalidity of the claim of the one who maintains that the commentary of the Qur'an is its recitation becomes apparent. Similarly invalid is the claim which holds that delving deeply into the meanings and imports of the Qur'anic verses is akin to engaging in forbidden interpretation. How distant is such a view from correct speech!

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Verses 9-11

This section stresses the obligation of the Friday ritual prayer (*ṣalāt al-jumu'a*) and the prohibition of engaging in trade when the Friday ritual prayer is due. This section also contains rebuke and admonishment for those who broke up and scattered off, rushing to trade and amusement during the time of the Friday ritual prayer, and condemns them for their deed.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۝٩

(62:9) O you who believe! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know.

The intent of 'the call made for prayer on Friday' in this verse, is the Islamic call to ritual worship (*al-adhān*), as in the verse *And when you call to prayer* (nādaytum ilā al-ṣalāti) *they make it a mockery and a joke; this is because they are a people who do not understand* (5:58).

The word 'Friday' in Arabic can be spelt either as *al-jumu'a* or as *al-jum'a*. It is one of the days of the week and it used to be known previously as 'the day of Pan-Arabism'—*yawm al-'arūba*. Later, the name *al-jumu'a* prevailed over it. The identity of the *...prayer on Friday...* is the Friday ritual prayer whose day is legislated. The word *al-sa'yu* in this verse means "to walk quickly, to hasten" while the phrase *...the remembrance of Allah...* (dhikrillāh) in this verse, according to one suggestion, refers to the ritual prayer (*al-ṣalāt*), as in the verse *...and keep up prayer* (al-ṣalāt)*; surely prayer* (al-ṣalāt) *keeps* (*one*) *away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah* (dhikrullāh) *is the greatest* (29:45). But it is also suggested to refer to the (Friday) sermon (*al-khuṭba*) which is delivered before the ritual prayer. The part of this verse that says *...and leave off trading...* is an imperative to abandon it, and the meaning of this imperative, contextually, is a prohibition from being occupied with any activity which keeps one away from the Friday ritual prayer, irrespective of whether it is trade or other than trade. This is while the reason the prohibition, (in this verse), is (specifically) associated with trade (*al-bay'*) is because trade is the most apparent instance of what occupies a person from the ritual prayer and keeps him or her away from it.

Thus the meaning obtained is: "O you who believe! When the Islamic call to the ritual prayer (*al-adhān*) is made for the Friday ritual prayer, on its (legislated, chosen) day, then diligently and earnestly walk to the ritual prayer, and leave off trade and everything that preoccupies you or keeps you from it."

The end part of this verse which reads *...that is better for you, if you know* serves as an encouragement and an incitement to the Muslims regarding what God has ordered them of the (Friday) ritual prayer and abandoning trade.

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

(62:10) But when the prayer is ended, then disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah's grace, and remember Allah much that you may be successful.

The initial statement *But when the prayer is ended...* means "(when) the establishment of the Friday ritual prayer (is ended)," while the clause *...then disperse abroad in the land...* means "to separate and disperse in the land." The statement *...and seek of Allah's grace...* means "to seek sustenance," considering that this imperative functions as the opposite of the imperative to leave off trade in the previous verse. It was pointed out previously that the (actual) meaning and intent (of leaving off trade) was to leave off everything that preoccupied a person and kept him from the Friday ritual prayer (*ṣalāt al-jumu'a*), so similarly, 'seeking God's grace' means seeking His gifts and bestowals in an absolute sense when dispersing in order to seek His grace, (such as) by buying and selling, and seeking divine rewards by visiting the sick, striving to fulfil a Muslim's need, visiting a believing brother/sister, attending knowledge sessions, and similar deeds.

The imperative *...*(*and*) *then disperse abroad in the land...* comes after a prohibition (the prohibition of leaving off trading in the previous verse). Consequently, it signifies permissibility and legality rather than obligation. The imperatives 'seek!' and 'remember!' in this verse also need to be understood in the same fashion.

...and remember Allah much that you may be successful: The meaning of 'remembrance' (*dhikr*) in this verse is more expansive than verbal remembrance. It includes God's remembrance by the heart by turning to Him from within. This is while 'success' (*al-falāḥ*) (mentioned in this verse) means deliverance from every misery, and in this instance it is purification and knowledge. This is in light of the previous discourse about purification and teaching (of the book and wisdom), and what is in the next verse of severe rebuke and censure. This is because abundant remembrance (of something) entrenches the meaning of what is remembered and evoked, in the soul, and it etches it in the mind, and consequently, the source of heedlessness is removed, while it bequeaths religious piety and God-consciousness, which are the root and source of success. God says *O you who believe... be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah, that you may be successful* (3:200).

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا تِجَارَةً أَوْ لَهْوًا انْفَضُّوا إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَائِمًا ۚ قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهْوِ وَمِنَ التِّجَارَةِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿١١﴾

(62:11) And when they see merchandise or sport they break up for it, and leave you standing. Say: What is with Allah is better than sport and (better) than merchandise, and Allah is the best of Sustainers.

The word *al-infiḍāḍ,* in light of what al-Rāghib mentions, means "the breakdown or fracturing of something and the separation and scattering of its pieces one from the other." In this verse the word is used figuratively or metaphorically.

Transmitted reports of the Shi'a and the Sunnis agree that once upon a time (during the Prophet's time), there arrived in Medina a trade caravan. That day was a Friday. The Prophet was standing, delivering a sermon (before the Friday ritual prayer) when they (that is, the members of the caravan) began to beat the drum and the tambourine in order to inform the people (of their arrival) whereupon the congregants in the mosque broke up and scattered off, rushing to them, leaving the Prophet standing (almost alone) preaching, which is when this verse was revealed.

The word *al-lahw* means the usage of stringed instruments and instruments of singing and music so that people may gather together for trade/merchandise. The feminine singular pronominal suffix *hā* (it) in *ilayhā* (*infaḍḍū ilayhā*—they broke up and scattered off, hastening to *it*) refers to 'trade/merchandise' (*tijāra,* which is a feminine noun in Arabic) for it was trade/merchandise that was the (actual) intent and purpose (of the caravan) while *al-lahw*—the use of stringed instruments and instruments of music and singing—was intended for trade/merchandise or for the purpose of (informing and calling people to) trade/merchandise.

It is also suggested that the feminine singular pronominal suffix *hā* (it) refers to one of them (that is, to merchandise/trade or to sport), as if it was said: "they broke up and scattered off, hastening to sport (*al-lahw*)" (*infaḍḍū ilayhi*), or "they broke up and scattered off, hastening to trade/merchandise (*al-tijāra*)" (*infaḍḍū ilayhā*). (It is argued that) this is because each one of them, sport (*al-lahw*) and trade/merchandise (*al-tijāra*), is a cause or a reason for people to break off and scatter in haste towards it and to gather together for it. That is why (it is argued) the verse in question vacillates between the two, and says ...*merchandise or sport...* and does not say 'merchandise/trade *and* sport'. This is while (it is argued) the feminine singular pronominal suffix *hā* can be held to validly refer to both of them (that is, to merchandise/trade (*tijāra*) and to sport (*lahw*)) for (although) *al-lahw*—sport (is generally considered to be a masculine noun and

therefore referenced by a masculine pronoun yet since it) is primarily a verbal noun (*al-maṣdar*) both masculinity and femininity are permissible for it (and therefore the feminine singular pronominal suffix can validly apply to it too).

This is the reason the clause *...What is with Allah...* is reckoned as being better than *each one of them*, with regards to it, and so the verse says *...What is with Allah is better than sport and better than merchandise...* rather than saying "better than sport and merchandise."

The sentence *Say: What is with Allah is better than sport and* (*better*) *than merchandise, and Allah is the best of Sustainers* is an imperative to the Prophet to warn them of their error in what they had done—and how horrible and atrocious it was! This is while the meaning of *...What is with Allah...* refers to the divine reward (*al-thawāb*) which accrues from listening to the Friday sermon and the exhortation (it includes).

Thus the meaning obtained is: "Tell them (O Prophet), what is with God of divine reward (*al-thawāb*) is better than sport (*al-lahw*) and better than trade/merchandise (*al-tijāra*) because God's divine reward (*al-thawāb*) is goodness which is true, real, eternal, and continuous while whatever goodness exists in sport (*al-lahw*) and trade/merchandise (*al-tijāra*) is fanciful, a fantasy, fleeting, futile, and worthless, and perhaps it may entail God's wrath (too) as in the case of sport (*al-lahw*)."

It is said that the word *khayr* (goodness) that occurs in this verse is used here devoid of the meaning of preference, similar to the verse... *are sundry lords better or Allah the One, the Supreme?* Such usage is widespread (12:39).

The statement, *And when they see...* consists of the phenomenon of *iltifāt,* which is a grammatical shift in address. In this case the shift is from second person address (in the previous two verses) to third person address. The point intended to be conveyed by this shift in address is to emphasise, in light of what the context suggests, the condemnation and reproof of the deed by avoiding or refusing to honor them (the perpetrators) with a direct address, and leaving them in the state of the third person, their lord refusing to address or face them by His noble, gracious visage. What (further) augments this refusal to a direct address is the part of this verse which says *...Say: What is with Allah is better...* where God does not point out to whom the Prophet has to convey the message. So God did not say "say to them (the perpetrators)" just as He previously mentioned them by means of the third person plural personal pronoun *hum* (they) (which is implicit in the verb *raʿaw—they* see) at the beginning of the address, without preceding it with a relevant reference point to which the pronoun could (be understood to) refer to. Thus he merely said *And when they see...* and He sufficed by the meaning the context provided.

The Best of sustainers (*khayr al-rāziqīn*) is one of the beautiful names of God, similar to the beautiful name of God 'the Ever providing/Sustaining' (*al-razzāq*), and a discussion on the meaning of sustenance/provision (*al-rizq*) has already been made before.

Examining Narrations

(1) *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*: It is related that when the muezzin (caller to the Islamic ritual worship (*al-mu'adhdhin*)) would give out the call for the Islamic ritual prayer on Friday in Medina, a crier would call out: 'Trade is forbidden due to the speech of God *O you who believe! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know* (62:9).'

Author's comment: He (al-Suyūṭī) has recounted this report in (his narrative-based Qur'an commentary) *Al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of Ibn Abī Shayba, ʿAbd ibn Ḥamīd, and Ibn al-Mundhīr from Maymūn ibn Mihrān. The wording of the report there is as follows: When the muezzin (caller to the Islamic ritual worship (*al-mu'adhdhin*)) would give out the call for the Islamic ritual prayer on Friday in Medina—they (presumably the criers) would call out in the markets: 'Trade is forbidden, trade is forbidden!'

(2) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* explains the words *...then hasten to the remembrance of Allah* (62:9) as follows: "(It means) speed (or haste or acceleration) in walking."

(3) Abū al-Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) said the following regarding the imperative to hasten (*isʿaw*) to the remembrance of God in 62:9: 'It is said "then hasten" meaning: go, depart. And it is said "hasten" meaning: strive/get ready for it (that is, for the Friday ritual prayer, *ṣalāt al-jumuʿa*). This refers to trimming the moustache, shaving the armpit, cutting the fingernails, having a bath, donning the cleanest attire, and perfuming oneself for (the) Friday (ritual prayer). This is (the meaning of) *al-saʿyu* (in 62:9).' (The Imām then offers the following verse to substantiate the second meaning for *al-saʿyu* by saying): 'God says *And whoever desires the hereafter—and strives for it as he ought to strive* (wa saʿā lahā saʿyahā) *and he is a believer;* (*as for*) *these—their striving shall surely be accepted* (kāna saʿyuhum mashkūra) (17:19)'.[1]

Author's comment: He (the Imām) intends to explain that the word *al-saʿyu* is not limited to walking quickly (but includes the meaning of 'to strive for something, to prepare for something' as outlined above).

(4) *Majmaʿ al-bayān*: Anas narrates from the Prophet who said with

1 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, the transmission of Abū al-Jārūd from him.

respect to *But when the prayer is ended, then disperse abroad in the land*...(62:10): 'It is not seeking the world but rather visiting the sick, participating in a funeral, and visiting a believing brother'.

Author's comment: He (al-Suyūṭī) has recorded this report in (his narrative-based Qur'an commentary) *Al-Durr al-manthūr* from Ibn Jarīr from Anas, from the Prophet, and from Ibn Madawayhi from Ibn ʿAbbās from the Prophet.

(5) The following report from Abū ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) is related in *Majmaʿ al-bayān*. He said: 'The ritual prayer is on Friday, and dispersing abroad (*al-intishār*) is on Saturday.'

Author's comment: There are many reports available with this meaning.

(6) In the same source, ʿUmar ibn Yazīd relates from Imām al-Ṣādiq who said: 'I surely ride out for (my) needs, which needs God has sufficed (me). I do not ride out for them save with the hope and solicitation that God should see me setting out/engaged in procuring lawful (*ḥalāl*) sustenance. Have you not heard the speech of God *But when the prayer is ended, then disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah's grace, and remember Allah much that you may be successful* (62:10)? Have you considered?! If a man enters a house, has its door tightly shut behind him, and then says "My sustenance will come down to me." Will that happen?! Rather, he is one of three people who are not responded to (by God).'

ʿUmar ibn Yazīd said: 'I asked: "Who are these (three people)?" He replied: "(The first is) a man who has a wife, whom he prays against (curses her). Such a person shall not have his (negative) entreaty responded to (by God). This is because she depends on him and her custody is in his control (due to the matrimonial authority he has over her). If he wishes he can divorce her and set her free (thereby ridding himself of her). (The second is) a man who has a right on another man but does not testify to it, and so the latter denies him his right and the former prays against (or curses) him. Such a person shall not have his (negative) entreaty responded to (by God). This is because he abandoned what he was instructed to do (which was to testify to his right). (The third is) a man who has a certain ability but chooses to sit at home rather than dispersing abroad in the land. He neither seeks nor searches so that he may sustain himself. When such a person prays (to God) he will not be responded to."'

(7) *Majmaʿ al-bayān*: Jābir ibn ʿAbdillāh narrates: 'A caravan arrived while we were praying with the Messenger of God. So the people (congregants) broke up and scattered off, rushing to it. None save twelve men remained

behind and I was one of them, whereupon this verse was revealed *And when they see merchandise or sport they break up for it, and leave you standing. Say: What is with Allah is better than sport and* (*better*) *than merchandise, and Allah is the best of Sustainers* (62:11).

(8) In *ʿAwāli al-Laʾālī*, Muqātil ibn Sulaymān narrates: 'The Messenger of God was delivering his sermon on Friday when Diḥya al-Kalbī arrived from al-Shām (Byzantine) with (his) trade wares. When he would arrive, not a person remained save that s/he visited him (in order to sample his wares). He would offer everything the people needed, when he arrived, from flour and wheat and other things. Then he would beat the drum in order to call the people and inform them of his arrival. The people would come out and purchase from him. Once he arrived on Friday, and this was before he had embraced the Muslim faith. The Messenger of God was delivering the sermon on the pulpit and the people rushed out. None remained in the mosque save twelve men whereupon the Prophet said: "Had it not been for these (twelve), stones from the sky would have rained on them (that is, the people)," and God revealed the verse of Sūrah al-Jumuʿa'.

Author's comment: This anecdote is narrated by means of many chains of transmission, both Shiʿa and Sunni chains of transmission. The reports however differ regarding the number of congregants who stayed behind in the mosque, between seven to forty congregants.

ʿAwāli al-Laʾālī has the third person plural past tense verb *infaḍḍū* defined as *tafarraqū*—to separate and scatter. It is (also) reported from Abū ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) who explained the words, *And when they see merchandise or sport they break up for it, and leave you standing*....(62:11) as: 'they departed for it (*inṣarafū ilayhā*) and left you standing, preaching on the pulpit (*wa tarakūka qāʾiman ʿala al-minbar*)'.

(9) Jābir ibn Samra said: 'I have not seen the Messenger of God preaching save that he was standing. Therefore, whoever relates to you that he preached while sitting (on the pulpit), deny him and call him a liar'.

Author's comment: This is related in other reports too.

(10) Ṭāwūs said: 'The Messenger of God preached standing. Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān did the same. The first person who sat on the pulpit was Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān'.[1]

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Abī Shaybah, from him.

Chapter 63

Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn (The Hypocrites)

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Introduction

This chapter describes the hypocrites. It characterizes them with severe and intense enmity (towards the Muslim faith) and stigmatizes them for that. It instructs the Prophet to guard against them and counsels the believers to guard against hypocritical characteristics and qualities so that they may not fall into its trap, and so that it may not drag them to hellfire. This chapter is of Medinan provenance.

Verses 1-8

إِذا جاءَكَ الْمُنافِقُونَ قالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَ اللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنافِقِينَ لَكاذِبُونَ ۝١

(63:1) When the hypocrites come to you, they say: We bear witness that you are most surely Allah's Messenger, and Allah knows that you are most surely His Messenger, and Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are surely liars.

The word *al-munāfiq* is an active participle, derived from the verbal noun *al-nifāq*.[1] In Qur'anic convention it means "to manifest belief and hide disbelief."

Lying (*al-kidhb*) is contrary to truthfulness (*al-ṣidq*). It is the non-conformity of information with external reality. Therefore, it is a description of information akin to the word 'truthfulness' (which also serves as a description of information). But it may happen that a piece of information is considered from the perspective of its conformity or lack thereof with external reality but not its conformity or lack thereof with the beliefs of the informant him or herself. In the latter case, a piece of information may conform to the beliefs of the informant, in which case it would be judged as true from him or her while its non-conformity with the beliefs of the informant would lead to it being judged

1 Translator's Note: It is the sound masculine plural of *al-munāfiq* (singular) that occurs in this verse. This is *al-munāfiqūn*—hypocrites.

a lie from him or her. Hence, it could be said: 'so and so is a liar' if his or her information fails to conform to external reality just as the same judgment can be made of him or her if such a person said something which contradicted his or her beliefs.

The first kind of conformity/non-conformity of information is called the 'truth/falsity of information' respectively, while the second kind of conformity/non-conformity of information is called the 'truth/falsity of the informant' respectively.

Thus God's speech, which says *When the hypocrites come to you, they say: We bear witness that you are most surely Allah's Messenger*... relates the hypocrites manifesting their faith by testifying to (the Prophet Muḥammad's) divine Messengership. Testifying to (the Prophet Muḥammad's) divine Messengership involves faith in what the Messenger had brought forth, and includes faith in God's unity as well as faith in the Day of Judgment. Thus it involves complete faith.

The statement ... *and Allah knows that you are most surely His Messenger*... serves as confirmation from God in favor of the Prophet Muḥammad's divine Messengership. God mentions this confirmation although the Qur'anic revelation and its addressing the Prophet was sufficient in confirming his divine Messengership, nevertheless, God mentions His confirmation here so that it could serve as a clarifying context that the hypocrites were liars from the perspective of the non-conformity of their belief with what they were saying even though their statement, in and of itself, was truthful. Thus they were liars in what they were saying in the sense of the 'falsity of the informant' and not in the sense of the 'falsity of the information'. Consequently, the end part of the verse ...*and Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are surely liars*... intends to specify the 'falsity of the informant' and not the 'falsity of the information'.

اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ ساءَ ما كانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ۝٢

(63:2) They make their oaths a shelter, and thus turn away from Allah's way; surely evil is what they were doing.

The word *aymān* that occurs in this verse is the plural of *yamīn*. It means "oaths." The word *junna* that occurs in this verse means "a shield." Its intent here is "that by which a person protects or safeguards him or herself." It is used here as a figure of speech. The word *al-ṣadd* can have the meaning of "to turn away, to cause to turn away" (*al-iʿrāḍ*). Consequently, it means "turning themselves away from God's path" which is religion. It can also have the meaning of "to dissuade, to avert, to hinder, to repel" (*al-ṣarf*), in which case it means "dissuading the generality of people from the religion" while they (the

hypocrites) are protected due to their false oaths.

Hence the meaning of this verse is: 'The hypocrites have taken their false oaths, which they swear, as protection for themselves, and so they turn (themselves) away from God's path and His religion' or that 'they dissuade the generality of people from God's religion by whatever means they can to dissuade, such as by turning matters upside down and by frustrating or corrupting people's resolve and determination'.

The concluding statement *...surely evil is what they were doing...* serves as denunciation of their deeds which they continued to engage in from the onset of their hypocrisy till the revelation of the chapter.

ذٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا فَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٣﴾

(63:3) That is because they believed, then disbelieved, so a seal is set upon their hearts so that they do not understand.

According to one suggestion, it is apparent that the singular demonstrative pronoun 'that' (*dhālika*) (at the beginning of this verse) points to the evil of what the hypocrites had been perpetrating (and which is deplored in the end part of the previous verse). It is also suggested that the singular demonstrative pronoun points to the totality of what has gone before of their evil deeds, from their lies, their hiding behind false oaths, their turning (themselves or the people) away from God's path, and their harmful deeds.

The meaning of *...they believed...* (in this verse) according to one suggestion, is their apparent expression of faith by means of their tongues, which is by testifying that there is no God save God and that Muḥammad is His messenger, followed by their disbelief due to their inner selves being devoid of (the) faith (apparently testified to). This is similar to what God says about them *And when they meet those who believe, they say: We believe; and when they are alone with their Satans, they say: Surely we are with you, we were only mocking* (2:14).

It is not implausible that there were some among the hypocrites who did believe in fact and then apostatized, concealing their apostasy, and so joined the hypocrites, waiting for the Prophet and the believers to meet with disaster and misfortune, as is apparent from some of the verses of Sūrah al-Tawba, such as *So He made hypocrisy to follow as a consequence into their hearts till the day when they shall meet Him because they failed to perform towards Allah what they had promised Him and because they told lies* (9:77). God has described the one from among them in whose heart faith (*al-īmān*) did not enter, by such statement of His as *...and disbelieved after their Islam...* (9:74).

Thus it is apparent that the meaning of *...they believe, then disbelieve...* is their expression of the two creedal formulas (of the Islamic faith), whether such

expression of faith was heartfelt (and therefore sincere) or by the mere manifestation of speech (and therefore insincere and not heartfelt), followed by their disbelief by means of acts which accompany disbelief such as mockery of the faith and negating some rules.

The concluding statement *...so a seal is set upon their hearts so that they do not understand...* 'Not understanding' is rendered in this verse as a consequence of 'a sealed heart', which is proof that the sealing of the heart is the phenomenon which leads to the heart's refusal to allow the word of truth to enter it. Consequently, it despairs of faith and gets deprived of the truth.

'Setting a seal upon the heart' is to render it such that it does not accept the truth nor does it follow it. Consequently, it undoubtedly follows whims and desires as God says *These are they upon whose hearts Allah has set a seal and they follow their low desires* (47:16). So it neither understands nor listens nor knows as God says *...and a seal is set on their hearts so they do not understand* (9:87). And He says *...and* (*We*) *set a seal on their hearts so they would not hear* (7:100). And He says *...and Allah has set a seal upon their hearts so they do not know* (9:93). In any event, setting a seal on the heart by God does not occur save as requital. This is because sealing the heart is to mislead and misguide it while whatever misleading that may be attributed to God is (only) by way of requital and not by way of a primary misleading, which has been explained repeatedly.

وَ إِذا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسامُهُمْ وَ إِنْ يَقُولُوا تَسْمَعْ لِقَوْلِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُسَنَّدَةٌ يَحْسَبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ قاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٤﴾

> (63:4) And when you see them, their persons will please you, and if they speak, you will listen to their speech; (they are) as if they were pieces of wood propped up; they think every cry to be against them. They are the enemy, therefore beware of them; may Allah fight them, whence are they turned back?

What is apparent is that the second person singular pronoun 'you' in '*you* see' (*ra'ayta*) and '*you* will listen' (*tasma'*) in this verse is not a reference specifically to the Prophet, rather it is a general reference to all those who see the hypocrites and listen to their speech on account of them being dressed in fine attire and being eloquent and expressive in speech. The intended meaning of this verse is that the hypocrites come across as comely and graceful of visage and proportionate of body limbs, such that if a person were to look at them their bodies would please and astonish him and he would marvel at them. Further, they come across as eloquent and expressive of speech such that if a person were to listen to their speech, he would be attracted to listening to their speech due to its apparent sweetness and good composition.

The ensuing statement ... (*they are*) *as if they were pieces of wood propped up.* It occurs as censure and blame for them concerning their inner state. The word *al-khushub* (pieces of wood) is the plural of *khashba* (a piece of wood/timber) while the word *al-tasnīd*[1] means "to prop up, erect or set up something such that it is reliant on something else (for support) such as a wall or something similar." This part of the verse occurs in the context of censure and blame for the hypocrites, and it completes and complements the immediately preceding part of this verse. Its meaning (therefore) is that the hypocrites possess fine, admirable, and impressive bodies, and excellent and outstanding speech, which is sweet; however they are like pieces of wood propped up; apparitions or shapes without spirits, devoid of goodness, completely useless due to them lacking understanding.

The statement ...*they think every cry to be against them...* occurs as yet another instance of blame and censure for them. It means that the hypocrites, due to their hiding their disbelief from the believers, constantly live in a state of fear, dread, and alienation, fearing that their secret will be exposed and the people will come to know their inner state. Thus they think that every cry that they hear is against them and that they are meant by it.

They are the enemy, therefore beware of them: This means the hypocrites are full of enmity, excessively so! Indeed, the worst of your enemies is the one who is hostile to you while you consider him to be your friend!

The clause ...*may Allah fight them...* serves as imprecation against them in favor of being killed, which is the severest adversity of the world. This is while the use of the word 'to fight against' (*al-muqātala*) rather than 'to kill' (*al-qatl*) in this verse is to indicate severity. It is also suggested that this part of the verse means expulsion and distance from God's mercy, just as it is suggested that it occurs as a statement of information rather than an imprecation, which means that this speech intends to inform that the hypocrites are decidedly included in God's damnation and expulsion, which is established (for them). It is also suggested that this speech serves to convey surprise such as the statement of wonder and amazement *qātalahu allāhu mā ashʿarahu* meaning: 'may God fight him! How profane a poet is he!' However, what is apparent from the verse's context (regarding the meaning of this speech) is the first of the perspectives mentioned.

The concluding statement ...*whence are they turned back?* It occurs in the sense of surprise and amazement, meaning: "how or wherefrom are they turning

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1 Translator's Note: The word related to *al-tasnīd*, which occurs in this verse, is the feminine singular passive participle *musannadah*, serving as an adjective for *khushubun*, and translated as: '(pieces of wood) propped up/propped up (pieces of wood)'.

away from the truth?" It is also suggested that it occurs in the sense of rebuke and censure and not in the sense of interrogation.

وَ إِذا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَوَّوْا رُؤُسَهُمْ وَ رَأَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ وَ هُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ ۝٥

(63:5) And when it is said to them: Come, the Messenger of Allah will ask forgiveness for you, they turn back their heads and you may see them turning away while they are big with pride.

The word *al-talwiya* is the verbal noun of the second form of Arabic verbal forms for the root letters *l-w-y.* The first form is *lawā* (past tense), *yalwī* (present tense), *layyan* (verbal noun) and means "to incline, to tilt, to turn (something such as the head) away, to avert (something such as the face away)."

So the meaning of this verse is that: 'When it was said to the hypocrites, "Come (all of you), let the Messenger of God seek forgiveness for you," and that was when some of their treachery and wickedness had come to light, they inclined or twisted or turned their heads away in disdain, repulsion, and pride, and a person could see them keeping away from or shunning their interlocutor, being too haughty and proud to respond (positively) to his suggestion'.

سَواءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ لَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفاسِقِينَ ۝٦

(63:6) It is alike to them whether you beg forgiveness for them or do not beg forgiveness for them; Allah will never forgive them; surely Allah does not guide the transgressing people.

This verse means that beseeching forgiveness for the hypocrites or not beseeching it for them is the same. This is while the equivalence of the existence or absence of something is a figure of speech which aims to convey the meaning that the benefit desired or sought from that thing is of no avail. Hence the meaning arrived at is: 'Your beseeching forgiveness for the hypocrites will not benefit or profit them!'

The phrase *...Allah will never forgive them...* is a pre-emptive rejoinder or retort to an assumed implicit question that interjects here as if a person were to ask here: 'Why is seeking forgiveness for the hypocrites or not seeking it for them, the same?' And the response given would be: (because) ... *Allah will never forgive them...*

The concluding statement *...surely Allah does not guide the transgressing people* serves as a justifying explanation for the preceding part of this verse that reads *...Allah will never forgive them...* The meaning thus arrived at is: 'God

will never forgive them. This is because His forgiveness for them is (or takes the form of) guidance for them towards happiness and paradise. This is while they are a transgressing people, beyond the pale of (God's) worship due to their concealing their disbelief and due to the seal on their hearts, and God does not guide a transgressing people!'

هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ لا تُنْفِقُوا عَلى مَنْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَنْفَضُّوا وَ لِلَّهِ خَزائِنُ السَّماواتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ وَ لكِنَّ الْمُنافِقِينَ لا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٧﴾

(63:7) They are the ones who say: Do not spend upon those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they break up and disperse (from him). And Allah's are the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand.

The word *al-infiḍāḍ* means "to separate, to disperse, to scatter." The meaning of this verse is: 'The hypocrites are the ones who say (to others) "do not spend your wealth upon the poor, destitute believers (who believe in the Prophet Muḥammad); those who constantly stay with and in the company of the Messenger of God, attending to him and keeping close to him to aid him and to give practical effect to his instructions and to accomplish and carry out his aims and goals. So do not spend your wealth upon them until they abandon the Prophet, scattering from him so that the Prophet ceases to control us and rule over us."'

The phrase, *And Allah's are the treasures of the heavens and the earth...* serves as a rejoinder to their speech in this verse which says ...*Do not spend upon those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they break up...* meaning thereby: 'the religion is God's religion and He has no need for the hypocrites spending their wealth for His religion. This is because the treasures of the heavens and the earth belong to Him! He can spend it and provide sustenance to whoever He wishes and however He wishes. Thus if He wished He could undoubtedly enrich the destitute and poor from the believers, however, He chose what is better and more suitable for them. And so He tests them by poverty and calls them to His worship, devotion, and obedience through patience so that He could reward them with a noble reward, and guide them to a straight path while the hypocrites are woefully ignorant of all this.'

This is the intent of the concluding phrase ...*but the hypocrites do not understand.* It means they fail to understand the wisdom behind that. It is also possible that this part means that the hypocrites do not understand that the treasures of the universe are in God's control. He is the Sustainer and there is no sustainer apart from Him. Consequently, if He wished He could enrich the believers, however, the hypocrites think that wealth and poverty are in the hands of

causes and so if they did not spend on those poor and destitute from among the believers the latter would fail to find a sustainer that would sustain them!

يَقُولُونَ لَئِنْ رَجَعْنا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ وَ لِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَ لِرَسُولِهِ وَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ لكِنَّ الْمُنافِقِينَ لا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨﴾

(63:8) They say: If we return to Medina, the more honorable will surely drive out the lowlier therefrom; and to Allah belongs the honor and to His Messenger and to the believers, but the hypocrites do not know.

The person who uttered these words was ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay ibn Salūl. He was also the person who uttered the words *Do not spend upon those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they break up and disperse* (*from him*).... (63:7) cited in the previous verse. However, in these two verses, these words are attributed to a group rather than to a single individual (as evidenced by such plural pronouns as '*they* are the ones who say...', '*they* say: if *we* return to Medina...') and that is because the speech of God intends to render ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay ibn Salūl's companions who approved of his ideas and statements, and supported them, as his co-partners and associates.

In his statement ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay ibn Salūl intended himself by the comparative adjective 'the more honorable' (*al-aʿazzu*) and intended the Messenger of God by the comparative adjective 'the lowlier' (*al-aẓallu*). And in this statement, he intended to menacingly threaten the Prophet of expulsion from Medina upon returning to it. However, God refuted him and those who were his associates in hypocrisy by His speech ...*and to Allah belongs the honor and to His Messenger and to the believers, but the hypocrites do not know.* Consequently, God restricted honor and dignity to Himself, His Messenger and the believers and so nothing remains for others save indignity and humiliation, in addition to which He negated knowledge from the hypocrites and so therefore nothing remained for them save indignity, humiliation, and ignorance.

Examining Narrations

(1) *Majmaʿ al-bayān*: These verses were revealed regarding the hypocrite ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay and his companions. This was when the Messenger of God got word that the members of the tribe of Banu al-Muṣṭaliq were gathering together to fight him (and the Muslims). Their leader and commander was al-Ḥārith ibn Abī Ḍirār, the father of Juwayriyya, (future) wife of the Prophet Muḥammad.

When the Messenger of God heard this news about them, he marched out towards them till he met them at one of their watering places called

al-Muraysiʿ located near Qadīd/Qudayd towards the (Red Sea) coast. Members of both camps advanced towards each other and fought each other. God overwhelmed and defeated the Banu al-Muṣṭaliq (for the Muslims) and killed whoever among them got killed, and He gave the Messenger of God their sons, women, and possessions as spoils of war. While the people were still at the watering place, a group of them came forth to drink there. ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb had hired a man from the tribe of Banū Ghifār, who was with him. His name was Jahjāh ibn Saʿīd and his task was to lead and guide ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's horse. It so happened that Jahjāh ibn Saʿīd and Sinān al-Juhanī, who hailed from the tribe of ʿAwf ibn Khazraj, began crowding each other at the watering place, and ended up fighting each other! Sinān al-Juhanī called out to the *anṣār* (Helpers) for help, crying out 'O people of the *anṣār* (come forth to help me)!' while Jahjāh ibn Saʿīd called out to the *muhājirūn* (the emigrants) for help, crying out 'O people of the *muhājirūn* (come forth to aid me)!' A man from the *muhājirūn* (the emigrants) came forth to support Jahjāh ibn Saʿīd al-Ghifāri. His name was Jaʿāl and he was a poor man. ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay said to him: 'You are surely a person who frequently dishonors and profanes!' The latter responded: 'And what stops me from doing that?!' And Jaʿāl's speech became severe against ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay upon which the latter said: 'I swear by what is sworn by, I will engulf you (in such adversities) that you will have no time to engage in such acts.'

ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay got angry. He had a group of his tribesmen with him. Among them was Zayd ibn Arqam who was yet a youth. ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay commented: 'Surely they (the *muhājirūn* (the emigrants)) loath us and have outranked and outnumbered us in our land! By God! Our example and theirs, respectively, is as the proverb goes: "Fatten your dog and he will bite you!" By God, when we return to Medina the more honorable shall expel the lowlier.' He meant by 'the more honorable', himself, and by 'the lowlier', the Messenger of God. Then, turning to his tribesmen who were present with him, he said: 'You yourselves have brought this (sorry) situation upon yourselves. You allowed them to settle in your land and you shared your wealth with them, however, by God, if you had withheld the favor of food from Jaʿāl and his ilk (meaning: the emigrant Muslims) they would not have ridden your necks (that is, become leaders over you) and would have been on the verge of turning away from your land and joining their tribes and clients.'

Thereupon Zayd ibn Arqam said (to ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay in retort):

'You, by God, are the lowlier and despicable one, the one enjoying the least position, and the hateful one in your tribe, while Muḥammad is the honorable and noble one, (a favor bestowed on him) from the Compassionate One, and he is the beloved of the Muslims. By God, I shall not love you after these words of yours.' 'Abdullāh ibn Ubay retorted sharply: 'Shut up! I was just joking.'

Thereafter, Zayd ibn Arqam walked over to the Messenger of God—and this was after the cessation of the current military campaign—and informed him of what had happened. The Messenger of God gave the order to depart and summoned 'Abdullāh ibn Ubay. When 'Abdullāh ibn Ubay arrived, he (the Messenger of God) asked him: 'What is this I hear about you?' 'Abdullāh ibn Ubay replied: 'I swear by the One who revealed the Book to you, I did not say anything of that kind at all, and Zayd is surely a liar.' Those of the *anṣār* (the Helpers) present there said: 'Messenger of God, he ('Abdullāh ibn Ubay) is our leader and our elder. Do not prefer the speech of a youth from the youths of the *anṣār* (the Helpers) over his. Perhaps this young man was deluded and made a mistake in his report.' So the Messenger of God excused 'Abdullāh ibn Ubay while censure and blame from the *anṣār* (the Helpers) spread against Zayd ibn Arqam.

When the Messenger of God had mounted his mount and set out, Usayd b. al-Ḥuḍayr met him and having greeted and saluted him as a prophet and wished him peace, said, 'Messenger of God, you have set out at a disagreeable hour, one at which you usually do not set out.' The Messenger of God said to him: 'Has not what your companion said come to your attention? He claimed that if he returned to Medina, the more honorable shall drive out the lowlier from it.' Usayd said: 'You, by God, O Messenger of God, will drive him out, if you wish. He is the lowly one by God, and you are the honorable one.' Then he said: 'Messenger of God be gentle/lenient with him. By God, God caused you to arrive (to Medina) at the very moment when his people were stringing precious stones to make him a crown and crown him thereby, so he thinks that you deprived him of a kingdom.'

When word of what had happened involving his father reached the attention of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Ubay (the son), he came to the Messenger of God and said: 'Messenger of God, it has come to my attention that you wish to kill my father. So if you have determined to do that then order me to do it and I shall bring you his head. For, by God, the tribe of al-Khazraj knows well that there is no man in it more

dutiful and devoted to his parents than I, and I fear that if you ordered any other than I for this task and he killed him, my soul shall not leave me at peace that I should see the murderer of ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay walking about among the people (freely), and consequently I will end up killing him. So, I shall end up killing a believer for an unbeliever and as a result, shall enter hellfire.' The Messenger of God said: 'Rather, be gentle with him, and make the best of his companionship as long as he remains with us.'

The reporters have reported: The Messenger of God marched with his followers all that day until evening, and all that night until dawn, and the first part of the following day until the sun hurt them; whereupon he halted with them, and they (all) fell asleep the moment they touched the ground. The Messenger of God made them march so strenuously in order to distract them from the talk of ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay that had taken place the day before. Subsequently, he set out with the people till he halted at a watering place in the Hijaz called Baqʿā'/Naqʿā', a little above al-Baqī'/al-Naqī'. That is when a strong wind blew, which hurt the Muslims and they became fearful of it, in addition to which the Messenger of God's she-camel got lost, and this was at night. The Messenger of God said: 'A hypocrite of great hypocrisy has died today in Medina.' When he was asked about the hypocrite's identity, he replied: 'It is al-Rifāʿa.' Then a hypocrite said: 'How can he (the Prophet Muḥammad) claim to know the unseen when he does not (even) know where his she-camel has wandered off? Does not the one who brings him the revelation inform him about it?' Whereupon Gabriel came to him and informed him of the hypocrite's speech, and the place where his she-camel had wandered off to, and the Messenger of God informed his companions of that. He said: 'I do not claim that I know the unseen, and I do not know it, however, God informed me of the hypocrite's speech and the place where my lost she-camel has wandered off to. She is in such and such a mountain pass.' And she was as he had said she would be. So they brought her back and the aforementioned hypocrite believed.

When they reached Medina, they found al-Rifāʿa ibn Zayd in a coffin. He was one of the (members of the Jewish tribe of) Banu Qaynuqāʿ, and one of the great men of the Jews. He had died on that day.

Zayd ibn Arqam relates: 'When the Messenger of God returned to Medina, I confined myself to my house due to the anxiety, grief, and embarrassment I felt.' Then Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn was revealed in

validation of Zayd ibn Arqam and in discredit and denial of ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay whereupon the Messenger of God took hold of Zayd's ear and raising him from the saddle, said: 'Young man, you spoke the truth, your ears perceived the truth, your heart perceived the truth, and God has revealed a Qur'anic revelation regarding what you had said.'

ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay was close to Medina. When he wanted to enter it, his son ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay came forth and made his camel kneel at the junction of the roads leading to the city (thereby blocking access and denying entry), upon which ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay said angrily to him: 'What is the matter with you, woe be to you!' His son answered: 'By God, you shall not enter the city but with the permission of the Messenger of God, and you will certainly learn today who is the more honorable and who is the lowlier. ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay complained to the Messenger of God about his son who instructed the latter to clear the way for ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay so that he could enter the city, upon which ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay said: 'If this is the command of the Messenger of God then I acquiesce,' and ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay entered the city. He did not live long after that save a few days till he complained (of sickness) and died.

When these verses (of Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn) were revealed and the lie of ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay was exposed, he was told: 'Severe verses (of censure and criticism) have been revealed about you, so go to the Messenger of God that he may seek forgiveness for you' upon which he turned back his head, and then said: 'You all asked me to believe (in the Prophet and his faith), and I did. You all asked me to pay (the Prophet) the *zakāt* dues liable on my wealth and I did. Now nothing remains save that I should prostrate to Muḥammad!' At which the following verses were revealed *And when it is said to them: Come, the Messenger of Allah will ask forgiveness for you, they turn back their heads and you may see them turning away while they are big with pride* (63:5). *It is alike to them whether you beg forgiveness for them or do not beg forgiveness for them; Allah will never forgive them; surely Allah does not guide the transgressing people* (63:6). *They are the ones who say: Do not spend upon those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they break up and disperse* (*from him*). *And Allah's are the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand* (63:7). *They say: If we return to Medina, the more honorable will surely drive out the lowlier therefrom; and to Allah belongs honor and to His Messenger and to the believers, but the hypocrites do not know* (63:8).

Author's comment: What he (the author of *Majmaʿ al-bayān*) has cited of the anecdote is taken from different transmitted reports, such as that transmitted from Zayd ibn Arqam, Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿIkrima, Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, Ibn Isḥāq, and others where the reports of some of them resemble that of the others.

(2) The following is recorded in *Tafsīr al-Qummī,* for *When the hypocrites come to you, they say: We bear witness that you are most surely Allah's Messenger, and Allah knows that you are most surely His Messenger, and Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are surely liars* (63:1): This was revealed in the context of the military expedition (*al-ghazwa*) of al-Muraysīʿ, which was the military expedition (*al-ghazwa*) against the Banu al-Muṣṭaliq. It took place in the fifth year after the (Prophet Muḥammad's) migration (from Mecca to Medina). The Messenger of God had marched out for it (that is, for the expedition). When he returned from it (that is, from the military excursion), he stopped at a well which (unfortunately) had little water in it.

Anas ibn Sayyār was an ally of the *anṣār* (the Helpers) while Jahjāh ibn Saʿīd al-Ghifārī was hired by ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. They gathered at the well (and let their buckets down). (Unfortunately), the water bucket of Anas ibn Sayyār got entangled with the water bucket of Jahjāh. (When one of the two buckets was drawn out) Anas ibn Sayyār said: 'My bucket!' and Jahjāh said: 'My bucket!' (And an argument broke out). And so Jahjāh struck Anas ibn Sayyār on his face and blood flowed. At this, Anas ibn Sayyār called out to the tribe of al-Khazraj (for help) while Jahjāh called out to the Quraysh (for the same). The men (of the Khazraj and Quraysh) took up arms and tribulation was about to befall (the Muslims).

ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay heard the call, and asked: 'What is this?' They informed him of the incident due to which he became very angry, and said: 'I was averse to this journey (from the outset). (Alas!) I am indeed the lowliest of the Arabs (today)! I did not think I would live to hear (an incident) such as this (taking place), and lack the ability to effect change.' Then he turned to his companions and said: 'This is your (own) doing. You lodged them (the Meccan emigrants) in your houses, comforted with them your wealth, defended them with your lives, and exposed your necks to slaughter. Consequently, your women became widows and your young children became orphans. But if you had expelled them, they would have been dependent on others.' Then he added: 'Indeed if we return to Medina, the more honorable from it shall expel the lowlier.'

In the group was Zayd ibn Arqam. He was a lad recently become an adolescent. The Messenger of God was under the shade of a tree during midday and with him was a group of his companions from the *muhājirūn* (the emigrants) and the *anṣār* (Helpers). So Zayd came forth and informed him of what ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay had said. The Messenger of God said: 'Perhaps you imagined it, young man.' He said: 'No, by God, I did not imagine it.' The Messenger of God said: 'Perhaps you were angry with him.' He said: 'No by God I was not angry with him.' The Messenger of God said: 'Perhaps he intended to fool you.' He said: 'No, by God!'

The Messenger of God said to Shuqrān, his slave: 'Saddle my mount' and the latter saddled his mount and the Messenger of God rode his mount. The people heard about that from one another and word about it got around. They said (in surprise): 'It is not customary for the Messenger of God to depart at such an hour!' But the people departed (nevertheless). Saʿd ibn ʿUbāda caught up with the Messenger of God and said: 'Peace be on you Messenger of God, as well as God's mercy and blessings.' He replied: 'And on you be peace.' Saʿd ibn ʿUbāda said: 'You were not used to marching at such an hour!' The Messenger of God said: 'Did you not hear the speech, which your companion uttered?' Saʿd ibn ʿUbāda said: 'What companion do we have other than you, Messenger of God?! He said: "Abdullāh ibn Ubay claimed that if he returned to Medina, the more honorable from its inhabitants shall expel the lowlier.' Saʿd ibn ʿUbāda said: 'Messenger of God, surely you and your companions are the more honorable, and he and his companions are the lowlier ones.'

The Messenger of God marched throughout that day with nobody speaking to him. The (tribesmen of) Khazraj approached ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay rebuking him. But ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay swore that he did not say anything of the kind. They said: 'Then, in that case, come with us to the Messenger of God so that we may excuse ourselves to him.' But he inclined his neck away.

When darkness descended the Messenger of God continued to march, and did so throughout that night. They (the Prophet and the Muslims) did not halt save for the ritual prayer. The following day, the Messenger of God made a halt and his companions halted too, and fell down fast asleep on the ground due to the exhaustion of the march. Then ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay came to the Messenger of God and swore to him that he did not say what had been reported of him, and testified that

there was no God save God, that he (Muḥammad) was His messenger, and that Zayd ibn Arqam had lied against him. The Messenger of God accepted that of him while the (tribesmen of) Khazraj turned towards Zayd ibn Arqam, cursing him and accusing him, saying: 'You lied against 'Abdullāh our lord!?'

When the Messenger of God departed, Zayd ibn Arqam was with him and he was saying (in prayer): 'O God! You surely know that I did not lie against 'Abdullāh ibn Ubay.' A short time had hardly passed when what would overtake the Messenger of God of the state of fainting/swooning at the moment of the descent of the revelation, came over him. He grew heavy, so much so that his she-camel was on the verge of kneeling due to the weight of the revelation. Then the state passed while sweat was dripping from his forehead. He took hold of the ear of Zayd ibn Arqam and lifting him from the saddle, said: 'Young man, what you said was true, while what your heart perceived was right. God has revealed a Qur'anic revelation regarding what you had said!'

When he alighted, he gathered his companions together and recited to them Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn: 'In the name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate. *When the hypocrites come to you, they say....* (63:1) till the verse *...but the hypocrites do not know* (63:8).' In this manner, God exposed 'Abdullāh ibn Ubay.

(3) Abū Ja'far (al-Bāqir) explained ... (*they are*) *as if they were pieces of wood propped up...* (63:4), saying: 'They do not hear nor do they understand'. And he explained ... *they think every cry to be against them...* (63:4), saying: 'it means, every voice.' And he explained ...*They are the enemy, therefore beware of them; may Allah fight them, whence are they turned back?* (63:4) saying: 'When God informed His Messenger about them, their tribesmen walked over to them and said, 'You have been exposed, woe be to you! Go to the Messenger of God so that he may seek forgiveness for you', but they inclined their heads away and abstained from seeking forgiveness. God says *And when it is said to them: Come, the Messenger of Allah will ask forgiveness for you, they turn back their heads and you may see them turning away while they are big with pride* (63:5)'.[1]

(4) Abū 'Abdillāh al-Ṣādiq said: 'God has entrusted to the believer all his affairs, but He has not allowed him to denigrate and humiliate himself. Have you not seen the speech of God here? (This is)...*and to Allah belongs the honor* (*al-'izza*) *and to His Messenger and to the believers...*

1 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, according to the account of Abu al-Jārūd, from him.

(63:8). It is imperative for the believer to be honorable (*ʿazīz*) and not to be ignoble and lowly (*dhalīl*).'[1]

Author's comment: The same report has been transmitted (by al-Kulaynī) through his chain of transmission from Dāwūd al-Riqqī and al-Ḥasan al-Aḥmasī (from the Imām), and by a different transmission chain from Samāʿa (from the Imām).

(5) Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Ṣādiq said: 'It is inappropriate for the believer to humiliate and degrade himself.' (The narrator Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar) asked: 'With what does he humiliate and degrade himself?' The Imām replied: 'He engages in (or takes up) something for which he (later) needs to apologize and excuse himself.'[2]

A Discussion about the Existence of Hypocrisy at the Dawn of the Muslim Faith

The Qur'an demonstrates heightened concern about the matter of the hypocrites and devotes a lot of its attention to them. It attacks and assails them fiercely by making mention of their evil morals, lies, deceptions, intrigues, and tribulations which they inflicted on the Prophet and the Muslims. Their mention recurs in Qur'anic chapters such as in Sūrah al-Baqarah, Sūrah Āl-i ʿImrān, Sūrah al-Nisāʾ, Sūrah al-Māʾida, Sūrah al-Anfāl, Sūrah al-Tawba, Sūrah al-ʿAnkabūt, Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, Sūrah al-Fatḥ, Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, Sūrah al-Ḥashr, Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn, and Sūrah al-Taḥrīm.

God has threatened them severely in His speech (the Qur'an). Thus he has threatened them, in this world, with setting a seal upon their hearts, casting a veil on their hearing and sight, removing their light, and abandoning them to darkness such that they cannot see. This is while in the hereafter, He has threatened them with relinquishing them to the lowest level of hellfire.

All these retributions against them were but due to the afflictions that afflicted the Muslim faith and the Muslims as a result of their scheming and deception, and various kinds of intrigues. The polytheists, Jews, and Christians did not cause as much harm to God's faith as did the hypocrites! The following speech of God, to His Prophet regarding them, suffices ...*They are the enemy, therefore beware of them*... (63:4).

The effects of their intrigues and machinations appeared early on when the Prophet migrated to Medina. Thus their mention occurs in Sūrah al-Baqarah, which was revealed, as is claimed, at the end of six months after the (Prophet's) migration (to Medina). Thereafter, their mention occurs in other chapters that

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1 *Al-Kāfī* through his chain of transmission from Samāʿah, from him.

2 *Al-Kāfī* through his chain of transmission from Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar, from him.

descended subsequently. These mention examples of their intrigues and their art at conspiracy such as their slipping away clandestinely from the Muslim army at Uḥud where they constituted approximately one-third of it, their forming alliances with the Jews and instigating (people) against the Muslims, their building the al-Ḍirār mosque, their spreading wide the story of al-Ifk, their provoking sedition at the watering well (of al-Muraysīʿ), and during the al-ʿAqaba incident, and other such examples which the Qur'anic verses mention. Their mischievous attempts at corruption and upsetting matters for the Prophet reached the extent where God threatened them by means of such words as *If the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease and the agitators in the city do not desist, We shall most certainly set you over them, then they shall not be your neighbors in it but for a little while* (33:60); *Cursed: wherever they are found they shall be seized and murdered, a* (*horrible*) *murdering* (33:61).

Reports had proliferated and spread that ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay ibn Salūl and his cohorts from the hypocrites were the ones who were turning matters up-side-down for the Prophet and that they were waiting for the Prophet and the believers to meet with disaster. They were well-known to the believers, approaching one-third of the community of Muslims and they were the ones who deserted the believers at Uhud where they separated from them and returned to Medina saying: 'If we had known there was to be (any) fighting, we would have abided by you!' These were ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubay ibn Salūl and his cohorts.

Here, (it may be noted that) some of them (the scholars) have mentioned that (1) the hypocritical movement (among Muslims) began when the Muslim faith arrived in Medina and (2) that it continued till the Prophet Muḥammad's death. This is what a group of them (the scholars) has mentioned. However, careful contemplation of the events during the Prophet's time, close scrutiny of the tribulations after his passing, and careful attention paid to the nature of the powerful and influential group (during his time) demand a reconsideration (of both theses).

Thus the first thesis maintains that the hypocritical movement (among Muslims) began with the arrival of the Muslim faith in Medina. However, there is no persuasive proof that hypocrisy had not infiltrated the Prophet Muḥammad's followers (the believers) in Mecca before his emigration (to Medina). Consequently, the argument made in favor of this thesis is incomplete. The argument made in favor of this thesis is that the Prophet and the Muslims in Mecca, before the emigration, lacked might, influence, and extensive power, such that the people would fear them, seek to protect themselves from them or hope to gain benefits from them by exhibiting faith externally and ingratiating themselves to them through faith in Islam. This is because the Meccan believers

were persecuted, subjected to tribulations, and tormented at the hands of the leaders of the Quraysh and the polytheists of Mecca who were opposed to them and opposed to the truth. This was in contrast to the circumstances of the Prophet in Medina after his emigration.

In Medina (the argument goes), after his emigration, the Prophet acquired helpers and supporters from the tribes of al-Aws and al-Khazraj and made sure to secure for himself, from their strong and powerful men, their commitment that they would defend him as they defended themselves and their families. At this time, the Muslim faith had entered the generality of their families. Thus he sought their assistance against a small number of hypocrites who had failed to believe in him, continued to remain on their polytheistic beliefs, and could not publicly announce their opposition to the Muslims and manifest their polytheism. Thus this small number of hypocrites sought to avoid harm by manifesting their faith in Islam and believed in it overtly while they adhered to their disbelief covertly, and schemed and deceived. This is the argument made in favor of the first thesis.

But as mentioned previously, this argument is incomplete, and this is because power, awesome strength and might of the opponents, the expectation of benefit, and seeking immediate abundant gain are not the only factors leading to hypocrisy such that it may be concluded that the absence of these factors should lead to an absence of hypocrisy. This is because the causes of hypocrisy are not restricted to these factors alone, for many a time, we observe in societies people who follow every propagandist, gather to all that is alive and astir, and care less about opposing a dissenting, mighty, tyrannical power. They continue to live in danger, insisting on such a life, hoping that they shall one day obtain success in order to implement their goals and control the people independently by controlling the reins of power over society, and gaining superiority on earth. This is while the Prophet Muḥammad had mentioned, during his preaching to his people that if they believed in him and followed him, they would be kings of the earth!

So it is reasonably valid to hold that there could be someone among those who believed in the Prophet and who seemingly followed him and adhered to his religion, who was in fact doing so in anticipation of, and in greed of arriving to his wish and desire by means of such behavior; that desire, hope, and greed being self-advancement, leadership, and ascendancy. The resultant effect of such a type of hypocrisy is not to turn matters upside down for the Muslims or to wait for the Muslim faith and the Muslims to meet with disaster, nor to harm the religious community; rather the effect of such hypocrisy is to strengthen the religious community as much as possible and to ransom for it wealth and

prestige so that such a person may organize by such means, its affairs, and so that he may prepare to benefit from it and seek abundant gain for his personal benefit. Yes indeed, such a hypocrite could cheat and deceive through opposition, dissent, and antagonism if something from the religion were to come about, such as something which thwarts or threatens his wish and desire to advance and gain ascendancy. In such a case he may engage in deceit by pushing matters back to the path that would end up to his corrupt goal.

It is also possible that there was a Muslim who fell into doubt regarding his religion and apostatized but hid his apostasy; something that is indicated in the speech of God *That is because they believe, then disbelieve...* (63:3) and as it appears from the tone of the following verse *O you who believe! Whoever from among you turns back from his religion, then Allah will bring a people, He shall love them and they shall love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer; this is Allah's grace, He gives it to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing* (5:54).

Moreover, those of the Meccan polytheists who accepted the Muslim faith on the day when Mecca was conquered hardly did so sincerely and honestly. It goes without saying, for whosoever carefully considers the various events and incidents that occurred during the years of the Prophet's preaching that the Meccan disbelievers and those who followed and supported them, especially the chiefs of the Quraysh, would not have believed in the Prophet had it not been for the overwhelming army that overran them and the glisten of the swords hanging over their heads on the day of the conquest of Mecca. Hence, how is it possible, in light of all that, to judge that the light of faith entered their hearts when the circumstances were as described, that sincerity and conviction had entered their souls and that they had believed in God voluntarily, from the first to the last of them, and that hypocrisy did not persist in them at all?!

The second thesis maintains that hypocrisy continued till the Prophet Muḥammad's death and ceased to exist thereafter. But this thesis is (equally) unacceptable! Admittedly, the reports about the hypocrites ceased after the Prophet Muḥammad's passing and the consolidation of the caliphate. Their traces and effects (appear to have) disappeared, and what used to appear from them of opposition, deceit, and evil intrigues ceased. However, was that due to the hypocrites reconciling with the Muslim faith? Was that because they had sincerely believed, to the very last of them, with the passing of the Prophet, and their hearts had been affected by his death, which had not been affected by his life? Or was it that they had made peace with the ruling Islamic elite by abandoning rivalry in that it would permit them to attain their hopes and desires; a

secret reconciliation after the Prophet's passing or before it? Or (perhaps) there occurred a fortuitous rapprochement between them and the Muslims such that they all came together in favor of the same project and therefore opposition disappeared? Perhaps sufficient thought given to the events that occurred during the final days of the Prophet's life, and the tribulations that occurred after his passing would guide to obtaining a clear and persuasive answer to this question. This is while what we have mentioned of the matter, in this section, is a general indication by way of research.

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Verses 9-11

This section cautions the believers to avoid some of the characteristics which bring about hypocrisy. These are to seek distraction in wealth and children from God's remembrance, and stinginess.

يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوالُكُمْ وَ لا أَوْلادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَ مَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذلِكَ فَأُولئِكَ هُمُ الْخاسِرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

(63:9) O you who believe! Let not your wealth, or your children, divert you from the remembrance of Allah; and whoever does that, these are the losers.

The word *al-ilhā'* means "to pre-occupy, to engross." The meaning of 'wealth and children diverting one from God's remembrance' is these things preoccupying the heart. This occurs by the heart clinging to or cleaving to them such that it causes the heart to turn away from attending to God. This is because wealth and children are the adornments of the life of this world. God says *Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world...* (18:46). A preoccupation with wealth and children entails the heart becoming devoid of God's remembrance and forgetting Him. This results in nought save speech that is unaccompanied by deeds and heartfelt affirmation. This is while a servant of God forgetting his Lord consequently leads to God forgetting him. God says *...they have forsaken Allah, so He has forsaken them* (9:67). Indeed, this is a manifest loss! God says, in describing the hypocrites *These are they who buy error for the right direction, so their bargain shall bring no gain, nor are they the followers of the right direction* (2:16). It is to this fact that the end part of 63:9 points, where it says *...and whoever does that, these are the losers.*

The principal teaching is to forbid believers from being distracted and pre-occupied with wealth and children. This teaching is rendered a substitute for the prohibition of wealth and children. Its substitution for the prohibition of wealth and children is to indicate that it is in the nature of wealth and children to distract and preoccupy (a person from God). Hence, the believers should not cling or cleave to their wealth and children such that these may distract and divert them from God's remembrance. Thus it is a figurative prohibition rendered emphatic due to its explicitness.

وَ أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ ما رَزَقْناكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوْ لا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ فَأَصَّدَّقَ وَ أَكُنْ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

(63:10) And spend out of what We have given you before death comes

to one of you so that he should say: My Lord! Why didst Thou not respite me to a near term, so that I should have given alms and been of the doers of good deeds?

The imperative in this verse to spend wealth is more general than (just) spending wealth for obligatory dues such as the *zakāt* dues and expiation dues (*al-kaffārāt*) or (just) voluntary spending of wealth, (rather it includes both), while the qualification of this imperative by *... out of what We have given you...* is to notify that this imperative is not a request regarding what the believers possess apart from God, rather it is regarding what God has granted them, and it is regarding sustenance that God has sustained them with, and it is regarding a kingdom that He has made them possess without what is granted leaving His suzerainty. (Thus) God is instructing them to spend what is from Him, regarding what He wants. Consequently, it is God who is doing them a favor in every instance!

The statement *...before death comes to one of you...* means 'before death arrives and consequently robs the person of his ability to spend of his wealth in charity in God's path.' This is because the time to do so will have been severed. The part of this verse that says *...so that he should say: My Lord! Why didst Thou not respite me to a near term...* serves as a conjunction to the previous part of this verse while the qualification of the 'term' as 'near' is to notify that a person would be content with (even) a little bit of respite, which is the amount of time from his life that is sufficient for him to spend something in charity so that it may ease his reckoning. Further, the qualification is to notify that death, whenever it may come, is near. The Messenger of God said: 'All that which is coming, is near.'

The verse concludes with *... so that I should have given alms and been of the doers of good deeds?* The first person singular present tense verb *aṣṣadaqa* is in the subjunctive mood because it occurs as the response to the wish statement (*jawāb al-tamanniyy*) while the first person singular present tense verb *akun* is in the jussive mood because it is in the meaning of the outcome (or result) of a conditional statement, the implication being: 'if I had given alms, I would have been of the good doers'.

وَ لَنْ يُؤَخِّرَ اللَّهُ نَفْساً إِذا جاءَ أَجَلُها وَ اللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِما تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١﴾

(63:11) And Allah does not respite a soul when its appointed term has come, and Allah is Aware of what you do.

This verse serves to cause despair to the one who hopes for a positive response from God for his plea that death is delayed after it has come upon him and after the manifestation of the signs of the advent of the hereafter.

The speech of God in the Qur'an repeatedly stresses that the designated time of death is from the instances of certain, inescapable fate. *Say: ...when their term comes, they shall not then remain behind for an hour, nor can they go before* (*their time*) (10:49).

The concluding statement ...*and Allah is Aware of what you do* occurs either as a description of the condition or circumstance (*al-ḥāl*) of the masculine second person plural pronoun *kum* (meaning: you all) suffixed to the word *aḥad* in *aḥadakum* (one of you) in the previous verse, or as a conjunction to 63:9 and 63:10 in which case it serves as an explanatory justification (for these two verses) where the meaning would be: 'do not let wealth and children distract you from God's remembrance, and spend in God's way for surely God is aware and knows your deeds and shall recompense you accordingly.'

Examining Narrations

(1) He (Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Ṣādiq) was asked about ... *so that I should have given alms* (*fa-aṣṣaddaqa*) *and been of the doers of good deeds* (*wa akun min al-ṣāliḥīn*) (63:10). He said: '(The first person singular present tense verb) *aṣṣadaqa* (I give alms in charity) is derived from *ṣadaqa* (charity, alms-giving) (while the phrase) *wa akun min al-ṣāliḥīn* (and been of the doers of good deeds) means: 'I go for pilgrimage' (*aḥujju*).[1]

Author's comment: It is apparent that the terminal part of the report (which mentions the pilgrimage) is one example or instance of what it means to be 'of the good doers.'

(2) ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās said: 'There is not a single person who dies and had wealth but did not discharge the *zakāt* dues liable on it, and was capable of making the pilgrimage but did not do so save that he will plead to come back to life at the moment of death.' They said: 'Ibn ʿAbbās, fear God! Will we see this disbeliever asking to come back to life?!' He replied: 'I shall recite (a portion of) the Qur'an to you regarding this issue' and he recited these verses, that is: *O you who believe! Let not your wealth, or your children, divert you from the remembrance of Allah; and whoever does that, these are the losers* (63:9). *And spend out of what We have given you before death comes to one of you so that he should say: My Lord! Why didst Thou not respite me to a near term, so that I should have given alms and been of the doers of good deeds?'* (63:10) He said: '"Good deeds" here refers to the pilgrimage.' (*Majmaʿ al-bayān*) The same is reported from Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Ṣādiq.

Author's comment: (Al-Suyūṭī) has transmitted this report in (his Qur'an

1 *Al-Faqīh*.

commentary) *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, from a number of comprehensive (Sunni) ḥadīth compilations, from Ibn ʿAbbās.

(3) Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir said the following regarding *And Allah does not respite a soul when its appointed term has come...* (63:11): 'Surely, with God are books (whose contents are) left pending or in abeyance (*kutub mawqūfa*). He advances from them what He wishes and delays what He wishes. Thus when it is the night of al-Qadr, He reveals from them everything that shall occur until the following year. That is the meaning of God's speech *And Allah does not respite a soul when its appointed term has come...* (63:11). When God reveals it and the heavenly scribes register it, then that is what is not delayed.'[1]

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1 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, through his chain of transmission from Abu Baṣīr, from him.

Chapter 64

Sūrah Al-Taghābun

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

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Introduction

This chapter resembles Sūrah al-Ḥadīd with respect to its context, content, and composition as if it is an abridgment of the latter. The goal of this chapter is to motivate and encourage the believers to spend their wealth in God's way. It also aims to remove sorrows and regrets which may occur in their hearts and which may pervade their souls due to misfortunes which afflict them with severity in the course of enduring challenges associated with faith in God, in the course of struggling in God's way, and in the course of spending wealth in His way, in that all those misfortunes occur with God's permission.

The verses of this chapter that we have cited here and which belong to the beginning of the chapter, serve as introduction to the (subsequent) mention of the aforementioned goal of this chapter. These verses clarify that God's beautiful names and lofty attributes require the resurrection and the return of all to God; a return in which the people of faith and good deeds will be led to eternal paradise while those who disbelieved and belied will be driven to everlasting hellfire. Therefore, these verses feature as an introduction regarding the imperative to obey God and His Messenger, regarding the imperative to be patient in the face of afflictions, and regarding the imperative to spend in God's way without being swayed or affected by those who deter them from the same and without fear of rebuke by any who censures or blames them for the same. This chapter is of Medinan provenance on the basis of the testimony of the content of its verses.

Verses 1-10

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يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

(64:1) Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth declares the glory of Allah; to Him belongs the dominion and control, and to Him is due (all) praise, and He has power over all things.

This verse mentions God's glorification (*al-tasbīḥ*), His dominion and control (*al-mulk*), His praise (*al-ḥamd*), and His power (*al-qudr*a). A discussion regarding these four items has occurred previously. This is while the meaning of the speech of God in this verse that says *Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth...* includes the heavens and the earth themselves, whoever is in it, and whatever is in it.

The speech of God in this verse that says *...to Him belongs the dominion and control...* is absolute. It signifies the absoluteness of (His) dominion and control and the absence of limitation or restriction to it in any form or fashion. Thus there is no rule that is effective save His rule and His rule is effected according to what He intends and wishes.

Similar is the case with the ensuing phrase, which says *...and to Him is due* (*all*) *praise...* It is absolute, and signifies that any praise made by anyone who praises is due to Him and returns to Him. The word *al-ḥamd* is praise for a beautiful thing that is accomplished by choice. The reason all praise is due to God is because the creation and the command are His and return to Him. There is no being or attribute or deed that is beautiful or praiseworthy save that it is from Him and returns to Him.

And similarly so is the concluding phrase *...and He has power over all things.* This indicates the generality of what pertains to His power, which is unlimited and unrestricted in any form or fashion.

If these verses, as pointed out above, are in the context of affirming resurrection and the return to God then this verse is like the first premise in that regard. It means that God transcends all defects in His essence, attributes, and deeds. He possesses power and suzerainty over everything and possesses the right to deal with and dispose of everything however He wishes and intends. This is while He only deals with everything graciously and beautifully. His power extends to everything and so it is His prerogative to deal with His creation by resurrecting them just as He dealt with them by creating and sustaining them (in the first place). Hence it is His prerogative to resurrect them if He wills it while He does not will save with wisdom.

هُوَ الَّذِى خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَمِنْكُمْ مُؤْمِنٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢﴾

(64:2) He it is Who created you, then some of you are disbelievers and some of you are believers; and Allah sees what you do.

The letter *fa* prefixed to *minkum* in *faminkum* (*then* [some of you]) is a particle that merely indicates the resulting of disbelief and belief from mankind and mankind's categorization and ordering along the lines of disbelief and belief. This two-fold division of mankind does not mean that disbelief and belief are

created by God or that they are not, rather the intent is to convey the division of mankind into two groups: some of them are disbelievers and some of them are believers. This is while the reason the mention of the disbeliever precedes the mention of the believer (in this verse) is because disbelievers are in abundance and predominate.

The preposition *min* (that occurs twice in this verse) in *fa-minkum* and *wa minkum* denotes partitiveness, something being a part of something, 'some of' (*al-tabʿīḍ*), thereby meaning 'some of you (or a part of you) are disbelievers and some of you (or a part of you) are believers'. Finally, the verse cautions *...and Allah sees what you do.* It warns that their division and separation into two groups is true, as mentioned, and that they are rendered distinct near God where the basis for such distinction is their deeds; the apparent thereof and the hidden, and God sees what they do. Their deeds are neither hidden from Him nor obscure, and God knows well their deeds.

This verse contains another premise regarding the affirmation of resurrection and the return to God, and its execution, which is that mankind is God's creation, rendered distinct near Him by disbelief and belief, virtuous deeds and evil deeds.

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ ۖ وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٣﴾

(64:3) He created the heavens and the earth with truth, and He formed you and made goodly your forms, and to Him is the ultimate resort.

The meaning of 'truth' (*al-ḥaqq*) is the contrary of falsehood and the contrary of something being vain and frivolous (*al-bāṭil*), which would have been the case had the creation of the heavens and the earth been without a confirmed, established purpose and goal as God says *Had We wished to make a past time, We would have made it from before Ourselves: by no means would We do* (*it*) (21:17). And as He says *We did not create them both but with the truth, but most of them do not know* (44:39).

...and He formed you and made goodly your forms: The meaning of the word *al-taṣwīr* is "to give shape and form to something" while the 'shape and form of something' refers to its structure and constitution, and the mode of its existence, as God says *Certainly We created man in the best make* (95:4). 'Goodly forms' means the harmony and proportionality of its constituent parts (or its components) one with the other, while the entirety of it is for the purpose of its existence. 'Goodly forms' does not mean the beauty, grace, and splendor of visage; rather it refers to the general goodness effective in things, as God says *Who made good everything that He has created, and He began the creation of*

man from dust (32:7).

Perhaps the special mention of the 'goodly forms' of mankind is in order to draw attention that their forms are fitting and adequate for their purpose and aim, which is the return to God. Thus this part of the verse is from the premises meant to confirm resurrection and the return to God, as pointed out earlier.

This verse brings to a close the (three) premises that seek to prove the necessity of resurrection and the return of creation to God. This is as follows: (1) Since God is a king, and absolutely powerful, then it is for Him to rule and govern as He wishes and to deal and dispose of as He wants, while He transcends all defects, and is praiseworthy with respect to His deeds. (2) Mankind is divided into disbelievers and believers, and God knows well their deeds. (3) Creation has a purpose and an aim which is devoid of error, vanity, and frivolousness. Therefore it is imperative that human beings are resurrected after their worldly life for the eternal and permanent hereafterly life so that they may live an enduring life there on the basis of what (their) differences in respect of faith and lack of faith necessitates. This is the requital due to which those of them who are believers shall be happy while those of them who are disbelievers shall be unhappy and miserable. It is to this conclusion that God points to in the end part of this verse that says ...*and to Him is the ultimate resort.*

يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٤﴾

(64:4) He knows what is in the heavens and the earth, and He knows what you hide and what you manifest; and Allah is Cognizant of what is in the hearts.

This verse serves as a (pre-emptive) rejoinder or retort to a doubt (assumed to have been raised here), a doubt of those who deny the resurrection based on it being far-fetched and improbable. The doubt is: 'How is the return or resurrection of existents possible when they are perishable and transient and when worldly events are so many as to be uncountable, and deeds and characteristics so many as cannot be enumerated? Some of these are manifest and public, others are hidden and secret, some of these can be witnessed and others not.' Thus it is to this doubt that the response is made in this verse in that God knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth, and He knows what mankind conceals and what it makes public.

It is suggested that the concluding phrase ...*and Allah is Cognizant of what is in the hearts* is a proof which occurs subsequent to the two phrases 'what you conceal' and 'what you manifest' in order to emphasize and confirm that God's knowledge equally encompasses what human beings hide and what

they manifest. Therefore its meaning is: 'God encompasses in knowledge the hidden secrets, inner thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and intentions that exist in the hearts of human beings which are not separate from them at all and do not leave them, so therefore how can anything that you all hide or make public be hidden from Him?'

This is while the clause *...and Allah is Cognizant...* has the proper name of God manifestly placed in place of the relevant third person singular pronoun 'He'. This part should have been (*He knows what is in the heavens and the earth, and He knows what you hide and what you manifest*); *and <u>He</u> is cognizant of what you do'* but instead God's proper name (Allah) is substituted for the pronoun. The point intended to be made here is to point out the reason for the judgment (made in this verse regarding God's intimate knowledge of everything), and also so that this part of the verse becomes a standard which serves as a proverb or a saying.

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ فَذَاقُوا وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۝٥

(64:5) Has there not come to you the story of those who disbelieved before, so they tasted the evil result of their conduct, and a painful punishment awaits them?

The word *wabāl* means "evil or disastrous consequences." This word occurs in this verse as part of a possessive construct (meaning 'something *of* something'), being affixed as it is, to *amrihim*, meaning "their conduct or matter, their affair," altogether becoming the phrase *wabāla amrihim,* which literally means "the evil or disastrous consequences *of* their conduct." Their conduct, in this verse, is a reference to their disbelief and what ensues from it of their wickedness.

When the necessary corollary of God's beautiful names and lofty attributes enumerated in the previous verses is the necessity of mankind's resurrection and their journey back to their Lord for reckoning and recompense then it is imperative that they be informed of what is incumbent on them in terms of the performance and non-performance of things, which is the divine path or law (*al-shar'*). The path to that is via (the institution of) Messengership (*al-risāla*). Consequently, it is imperative to send forth a messenger so that he may warn of hereafterly punishment and give glad tidings of hereafterly rewards, warn of God's anger and give glad tidings of His satisfaction, respectively.

God conveys the warning by referring to the news or the story of those who disbelieved in the past and that they tasted the evil consequences of their disbelief, while in the hereafter there awaits them a painful punishment. Then He moves on to express the cause of their disbelief which was belying the

Messengership (*al-risāla*) (enunciated in the next verse), and then expresses the cause of that being their rejection of the resurrection and the return to God (enunciated in the verse thereafter).

Then He concludes from all that of the necessity and requirement of the people's faith in God, His Messenger, and the religion which He had revealed to the latter (expressed in 64:8), and brings the aforementioned introduction (mentioned right at the onset of this section of verses) to a close by means of glad tidings and warnings. This He does by pointing out what has been prepared for the virtuous believers of everlasting paradise and for the others from the belying disbelievers of everlasting fire (in 64:9 and 64:10 respectively).

Thus, this verse *Has there not come to you the story of those who disbelieved before...?* is an address to the polytheists and it refers to the stories of past destroyed nations such as the people of Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd, and others from those whom God had destroyed due to their sins. This is while the part of this verse that says *...so they tasted the evil result of their conduct...* refers to what befell them of annihilating punishment, while the end of this verse *...and a painful punishment awaits them* refers to their hereafterly punishment.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُ كَانَتْ تَّأْتِيهِمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَقَالُوا أَبَشَرٌ يَهْدُونَنَا فَكَفَرُوا وَتَوَلَّوْا ۚ وَّاسْتَغْنَى اللَّهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿٦﴾

(64:6) That is because there used to come to them their messengers with clear arguments, but they said: Shall mortals guide us? So they disbelieved and turned back, and Allah does not stand in need (of anything), and Allah is Self-sufficient, Praised.

This verse serves to express the reason for what was mentioned previously of the disbelievers' punishment by an annihilating punishment, as well as by a (future) hereafterly punishment, which is the reason this verse occurs detached (from the previous verse) rather than conjoined (to it by means of a conjunction), as if this verse was a reply to an implicit question which a questioner had asked, saying: 'Why did what afflicted them of punishment afflict them?' And the reply occurs (in the form of this verse) *That is because there used to come to them their messengers with clear arguments, but they said: Shall mortals guide us? So they disbelieved and turned back, and Allah does not stand in need* (*of anything*)*, and Allah is Self-sufficient, Praised.* The masculine, singular, demonstrative pronoun *dhālika*—that—at the beginning of this verse refers to what was mentioned of punishment (in the previous verse).

The coming forth of God's messengers to the disbelievers and their preaching and calling the latter is expressed in this verse by the words *...there used to come to them their messengers...* (*kānat taʾtīhim rusuluhum*). Such manner of

expression (*there <u>used</u> to come to them*) points to (sustained) continuity (over a period of time—past habitual), while this verse expresses the disbeliever's disbelieving response by such (past tense) verbs as '*they said*' (*qālū*), '*they disbelieved*' (*kafarū*), '*they turned back*' (*tawallaw*), which points, in contrast, to a one-off affair connoting that the disbelievers responded with what they responded in the form of a one-off, determined, and uncompromising reply that did not entertain turning away from it, and that they resolutely abided by such behavior, which was stubborn, unyielding, and obstinate as well as insistent!

Thus this verse is in the meaning of the verse *These towns—We relate to you some of their stories, and certainly their messengers came to them with clear arguments, but they would not believe since they had rejected from before; thus does Allah set a seal over the hearts of the unbelievers* (7:101), and the verse *Then did We raise up after him messengers to their people, so they came to them with clear arguments, but they would not believe in what they had rejected before; thus it is that We set seals upon the hearts of those who exceed the limits* (10:74).

...but they said: Shall mortals guide us? The word *bashar* (translated here as 'mortals') is applied to the singular (mortal) as well as to the plural (mortals). The meaning of this word here is in the plural due to the (third person) *plural* present tense verb *yahdūna*(*nā*) (*they* guide (us)). (This *plural* present tense verb *yahdūna* (they guide) refers to *bashar* which is the subject of the verb thereby corroborating the meaning of the word *bashar* to be in the plural). This is while the word *bashar* is rendered indefinite here in order to convey the attitude of disparagement and contempt (that the disbelievers felt towards God's messengers which this part of the verse conveys via their speech).[1] The interrogative mode of this part of the verse denotes rejection and denial, meaning that the disbelievers said by way of rejection and denial: "One from among the mortals; mortals, who have no merit over us, will guide us?!"

This speech, coming from them, was based on pride and arrogance. The majority of these destroyed communities were polytheistic communities and denied divine prophethood, which was the basis of their discrediting and belying the call of the prophets. This is the reason God expressed the ramification of their speech *...but they said: Shall mortals guide us?* with the words '*they disbelieved*' (*kafarū*), '*they turned back*' (*tawallaw*), indicating thereby that the basis of their disbelief and rejection was a denial of the prophets and prophethood.

...and Allah does not stand in need (of anything): The word *al-istighnā'* means "to seek self-sufficiency; to seek independence from need; to seek a state

1 Translator's note: Had the word *bashar* been definite, it would have appeared as *al-bashar* in the verse.

of being able to do without others and to be free from want; to seek a state of not standing in need of anything." In relation to God who is self-sufficient, independent, and free from want by His very essence, it means to *manifest or demonstrate* self-sufficiency and independence. And this was because the disbelievers used to think that what they possessed of knowledge, power, and capability would protect them from annihilation and guarantee them permanence! As if existence could not do without them and that they were indispensable for it just as God relates the speech of one of them in the Qur'an: *And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said: I do not think that this will ever perish* (18:35). *And if We make him taste mercy from Us after distress that has touched him, he would most certainly say: This is of me, and I do not think the hour will come to pass* (41:50).

The outcome of this (false) conjecture (on the disbelievers' part), in fact, was that God has need of them and in them—while He is in fact self-sufficient, independent, and free from want by His very essence! Thus God's annihilation and extirpation of them is a *manifestation or a demonstration* from Him of His utter lack of need of their existence. Therefore, the meaning of this part of the verse *...and Allah does not stand in need* (*of anything*)... is a reference to their annihilation signified by the part of the previous verse that says *...so they tasted the evil result of their conduct...* (64:5).

A person who is self-conceited and enamoured of himself naturally thinks he has esteem and dignity near God (as if God owes him a favor) and that it is imperative for God to treat him well wherever he is, that God *needs* to make him happy and *needs* to be benevolent to him! The following verses indicate such thinking on the part of such people *...and I do not think the hour will come to pass, and if I am sent back to my Lord, I shall have with Him sure good* (41:50). *And I do not think the hour will come, and even if I am returned to my Lord I will most certainly find a returning place better than this* (18:36).

The outcome of this contention (on the part of the disbelievers), in fact, is that it is incumbent on God to make them happy however it may be, as if God needs them! Thus God making them taste the evil consequences of their conduct and His punishing them in the hereafter serves as a *manifestation or a demonstration* from Him of His utter lack of need of them. Consequently, the meaning of God not standing in need of them is the sum total of what is understood from the previous verse *...so they tasted the evil result of their conduct, and a painful punishment awaits them?* (64:5).

Thus these are two understandings of this part of this verse which says *...and Allah does not stand in need* (*of anything*)... where the second understanding is more complete. Anyhow, this part of the verse consists of an emanation of

majesty, greatness, and power that is not hidden, and this part of the verse is in the meaning of the following verse *Then We sent Our messengers one after another; whenever there came to a people their messenger, they called him a liar, so We made some of them follow others and We made them stories; so away with a people who do not believe!* (23:44).

It is also suggested that what is meant by this part of the verse is that God, by establishing proof and completing the argument against them dispensed of adding to that in regards to directing and guiding them to faith. It is also suggested that this part of the verse means that God did not stand in need of their obedience and worship from sempiternity (*azalan*) and eternity (*abadan*) since He is free of want and need by His very essence, but these two interpretations are as you can see them.

Finally, the verse concludes with *...and Allah is Self-sufficient, Praised.* This part of the verse occurs as a justifying explanation for the content of this (entire) verse, and means: 'God is free of want, self-sufficient, and independent in His very essence and He is praised for what He does. Therefore, what He did to the disbelievers in terms of making them taste the evil and disastrous consequences of their deeds and punishing them with a painful punishment due to their disbelief and their turning away, was from His state of being self-sufficient and free of need, and due to Him being just, for the punishment meted out to them was due to their (mis)deeds which were repelled back to them (in terms of consequences)'.

زَعَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ لَنْ يُبْعَثُوا ۚ قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتُبْعَثُنَّ ثُمَّ لَتُنَبَّؤُنَّ بِمَا عَمِلْتُمْ ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٧﴾

(64:7) Those who disbelieve claim that they shall never be raised. Say: Aye! By my Lord! You shall most certainly be raised, then you shall most certainly be informed of what you did; and that is easy to Allah.

This verse mentions another basis from the bases of the polytheists' disbelief. This is their rejection of a heavenly religion by rejecting resurrection. This is because there does not remain any point in favor of a religion which is based on commanding good and forbidding wrong, reckoning and requital, with the absence of resurrection and the return to God! The rejection of resurrection also serves as justification for the rejection of prophethood since there is no point, then, for communicating (divine) teachings (from God to mankind), and for threats (for disobeying the communicated teachings).

This is while the referent of *Those who disbelieve claim that they shall never be raised...* is to the generality of polytheists, including those who were

contemporaries of the Prophet Muḥammad such as the inhabitants of Mecca and those in its environs. However, it has also been suggested that it refers to the people of Mecca specifically.

The statement *...Say: Aye! By my Lord! You shall most certainly be raised, then you shall most certainly be informed of what you did....* is an instruction to the Prophet Muḥammad to respond to their claim, which was that they shall not be resurrected, by affirming its contrary (which is that they shall indeed be resurrected) in as much as the speech contains several types of emphases such as the oath (*wa rabbī—By my Lord*), and the (emphatic) letters *lām* and *nūn* (prefixed and suffixed respectively to the two second person plural passive present tense verbs thereby rendering them energetic and emphatic, becoming *latubʿathunna* [you all shall most certainly be raised] and *latunabbaʾunna* [you all shall most certainly be informed]).

The particle *thumma* (then) in this part of the verse—*thumma latunabbaʾunna* (*then* you shall most certainly be informed)—is to denote protracted conjunction in conformity with the order of the speech. This part of the verse (which says, then you shall most certainly be informed) points to the goal of resurrection which is reckoning (*al-ḥisāb*). This verse finally concludes with *...and that is easy to Allah.* It means that what is mentioned of the resurrection and the informing of the deeds is easy for God and not difficult, and so it serves as a rebuttal to the disbelievers for their assigning the matter of resurrection to God as being impossible. God has expressed this sentiment in yet another verse of the Qur'an, which is *And He it is Who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and it is easy to Him...* (30:27).

The proof that resurrection is easy for God lies in what this chapter enumerates at its beginning, of God's names and attributes of creation, dominion, and knowledge, and that He is glorified and praised. The aggregate of this leads to the conclusion that He is God—Allah—the One in whom all the perfect attributes are combined.

It therefore appears from here that the explicit mention of God's name of majesty—Allah—in the end part of this verse *...and that is easy to Allah* is to point out this justification. Hence the meaning obtained is: 'The resurrection is easy for Him *because* He is Allah'. This speech serves as a demonstrative proof and not a mere claim.

The exegetes have mentioned that this verse is the third of three verses wherein God instructs His prophet to swear by his Lord in favor of the occurrence of resurrection and the return. The first of these three verses is *And they ask you: Is that true? Say: Aye! By my Lord! It is most surely the truth, and you will not escape* (10:53). The second of these verses is *And those who disbelieve*

say: The hour shall not come upon us. Say: Yea! By my Lord, the Knower of the unseen, it shall certainly come upon you; not the weight of an atom becomes absent from Him, in the heavens or in the earth, and neither less than that nor greater, but (*all*) *is in a clear book* (34:3). The third is the verse under discussion here.

فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالنُّورِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْنَا ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٨﴾

(64:8) Therefore believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Light which We have revealed; and Allah is Aware of what you do.

This verse occurs as a ramification to the previous verse, and its meaning is: 'If all of you are undoubtedly to be resurrected, and if all of you are to be informed of what you did, then it is imperative on you all to believe in God and His Messenger Muḥammad, and the light which He has revealed to His Messenger Muḥammad. This is the Qur'an which guides, by its shining light, to the straight path and explains the laws and teachings of the religion.'

The sentence *...and the Light which We have revealed...* contains a sudden grammatical shift in discourse (*al-iltifāt*) from third person (in the immediately previous part of this very verse where God and His messenger are referred to in the third person—*Therefore believe in Allah and His Messenger...*) to first person (in this part of the verse where God refers to His revelation of the light in the first person—*...the light which <u>We</u> have revealed...*). Perhaps the point intended to be made by this sudden change in discourse is the completion of proof by adopting the strategy of testimony, which is the most effective in negating excuses. For indeed, how much difference there is between 'and the light which He has revealed' which (is in the third person and which) merely informs, and 'and the light which <u>We</u> have revealed' which (is in the first person and) consists of God's testimony that the Qur'an is a heavenly book, and a revelation from Him. Surely, a testimony is more affirmative and emphatic than a mere statement which simply informs.

It may not be argued: Of what benefit is the sudden change in discourse (here and its attendant effect) when the disbelievers were rejecting the Qur'an being God's speech, and a revelation from Him, for if they had affirmed that then what has been mentioned previously in this chapter of the proof of resurrection would have sufficed them and God could have dispensed of attaching the relevant change in discourse (with its attendant effect) in this verse here.

It may not be argued thus for the response to that would be: 'what the Qur'an contains of the verses of challenge (*āyāt al-taḥaddiy*), which establish it being the speech of God, would suffice in falsifying their rejection of it being the speech of God. In any event, testimony is more powerful and more affirmative than a statement that informs even though the latter (also) has evidentiary

value.'

The concluding statement *...and Allah is Aware of what you do.* It is a reminder of God's knowledge of the minutest details of their deeds so that He may emphasize by it the imperative with which this verse began, which is *Therefore believe...* Therefore the meaning arrived at is: 'Believe and be diligent in your faith since God is all-knowing of the minutest details of your deeds. He does not miss out nor is He heedless of anything from the deeds, and He shall recompense you all on their basis, without any doubt!'

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُكُمْ لِيَوْمِ الْجَمْعِ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ يَوْمُ التَّغَابُنِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

(64:9) On the day when He will gather you for the day of gathering, that is the day of mutual defrauding; and whoever believes in Allah and does good, He will remove from him his evil and cause him to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein forever; that is the great achievement.

This verse begins with the word *yawma* (translated as 'on the day when'). It is identified as an adverb of time (*ẓarf al-zamān*) (meaning the point in time) for when what the middle part of 64:7 speaks about, will take place, which is *...You shall most certainly be raised, then you shall most certainly be informed of what you did; and that is easy to Allah* (64:7). The identity of 'the day of gathering' (*yawm al-jam'*) in this verse is to the day of resurrection which is the day on which mankind shall be gathered for the rendering of judgement between them. God says *...and the trumpet will be blown, so We will gather them all together* (18:99).

The mention of the gathering on the day of resurrection occurs repeatedly in the noble Qur'an, and verses such as the following explain it: *...surely your Lord will judge between them on the day of resurrection concerning that wherein they differed...* (45:17). *So Allah shall judge between them on the day of resurrection in what they differ* (2:113). *Surely your Lord will judge between them on the day of resurrection concerning that wherein they differ* (32:25). Thus these verses indicate that the gathering of mankind will be for the purpose of rendering judgment between them.

Regarding the clause *...that is the day of mutual defrauding...* (*dhālika yawm al-taghābun*), al-Rāghib writes that the word *al-ghabn* means "when you undervalue or underrate your companion in your dealing or transaction between yourself and him by some kind of deceit, fraud or subterfuge." He

then writes: "*Yawm al-taghābun* is the day of resurrection due to the coming to light of deceit or duping or cheating or damage and (therefore) loss in dealings or transactions; dealings or transactions indicated by such verses as *And among men is he who sells himself to seek the pleasure of Allah....* (2:207), and *Surely Allah has bought of the believers their persons....* (9:111), and (*As for*) *those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their own oaths...* (3:77). So they (that is, those referred to in 3:77) will learn that they were duped in what they had abandoned of their transaction and in what they took part in or pursued from that altogether." (Al-Rāghib continues to write): And one of them (that is, one of the lexicographers) was asked about *yawm al-taghābun* and he replied: "(it is the day when) things will become manifest to them (that is, to the people) contrary to their expectations and measures in the world."

The first meaning mentioned by al-Rāghib is based on explaining the word *al-taghābun* by applying the meaning of duplicity, cheating, and deceit among the disbelievers due to their choosing a loss-making transaction and giving up a profitable transaction. This is a good meaning suggested for this word; however, it does not agree with the meaning of the sixth form of Arabic verbal forms (the verbal noun of which is on the pattern of *al-tafā'ul*, which is the form of *al-taghābun*). Its meaning is an act that is done reciprocally or mutually, an act done with each other; reciprocal action (which, as is evident, is absent in this meaning).

What al-Rāghib has then mentioned from one of them (that is, from one of the lexicographers) is a second meaning for this word, which is not devoid of precision. Verses such as the following support it: *So no soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes; a reward for what they did* (32:17). *They have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet* (50:35) ...and *what they never thought of shall become plain to them from Allah* (39:47).

The necessary corollary of this meaning is the common, shared experience of all the people gathered on the day of resurrection of having been deceived, duped, and cheated; believer and disbeliever alike. As for the believer, he will experience the sense of having been duped because he did not perform good deeds for his hereafter more than what he had done (when he witnesses what more he could have gained). As for the disbeliever, he will experience having been duped because he did not do good deeds at all (when he witnesses what he could have earned)! The shared perspective between the believer and disbeliever in this interpretation is that both of them failed to appreciate the day of resurrection, when alive, as it ought to have been appreciated. However, this meaning may be refuted in a manner similar to which the previous explanation was rejected.

But there is a third meaning suggested for the word *al-taghābun* (which is a verbal noun) that it should be considered to apply among those gone astray. These are those who were followed in leading astray (the followed), and their followers. So the ones followed, and these are the haughty and arrogant ones, dupe, cheat and deceive their followers, these latter being the weak ones. This occurs when those followed instruct their followers to prefer the worldly life and abandon the hereafterly one, and consequently they deceive and mislead. This is while the followers in turn, deceive and cheat those whom they follow in that they aid and support them in their haughtiness and arrogance by obeying their instructions, and consequently they deceive and mislead too. Thus both groups dupe and deceive the other and are in turn duped and deceived!

There is yet a fourth meaning for the word *al-taghābun,* conveyed in transmitted reports. This meaning maintains that every servant of God has a place in paradise such that were he to obey God, he would be awarded it, and a place in hellfire such that if he were to disobey God, he would be relegated to it. On the day of resurrection, the places of the people of hellfire in paradise shall be awarded to the people of paradise and the places of the people of paradise in hellfire shall be given to the people of hellfire. In this way, the people of paradise, who are the believers will be (in a manner of speaking) defrauding or outdoing the people of hellfire who are the disbelievers, and the disbelievers will be the ones duped, deceived, or outdone.

One of the Qur'an commentators has said the following after citing this explanation for the word *al-taghābun*: 'The remaining part of this verse coupled with the next verse has explained the meaning of the word *al-taghābun*. This is *...and whoever believes in Allah and does good, He will remove from him his evil and cause him to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein forever; that is the great achievement. And* (*as for*) *those who disbelieve and reject Our communications, they are the inmates of the fire, to abide therein and evil is the resort* (64:10).' However, it is not very apparent that the subsequent part of this verse and the next verse do in fact explain the word's meaning, as is claimed.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٠﴾

(64:10) And (as for) those who disbelieve and reject Our communications, they are the inmates of the fire, to abide therein and evil is the resort.

The explanation of the latter half of the previous verse, that is *...and whoever believes in Allah and does good, He will remove from him his evil and cause him to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein forever; that is the great achievement* (64:9) as well as that of this verse, that is *And* (*as for*)

those who disbelieve and reject Our communications, they are the inmates of the fire, to abide therein and evil is the resort has repeatedly been made previously.

Examining Narrations

(1) The Prophet Muḥammad said: 'There is not a servant (of God) who enters paradise save that he shall be shown his place in hellfire—(one to which he would have been relegated to) had he sinned and disobeyed (God)—so that he may increase in gratitude to God. And there is not a servant (of God) who enters hellfire save that he shall be shown his place in paradise—(one which he would have been rewarded with) had he done virtuous deeds—so that he may increase in sadness and regret.'[1]

Author's comment: There are many reports with this meaning transmitted via Sunni and Shi'a chains of transmission. A number of these reports have been cited in the commentary of the initial part of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn.

(2) Ibn Bābwayhi transmits by means of his chain of transmission from Ḥafṣ ibn Ghiyāth from Abu 'Abdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) who said: '*Yawm al-talāq* (the day of the meeting) is a day when the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth shall meet, while *yawm al-tanād* (the day of calling out) is a day when the people of hellfire shall call out to the people of paradise, (saying)...*Pour on us some water or of that which Allah has given you* (7:50). This is while *yawm al-taghābun* is a day when the people of paradise will outdo the people of hellfire, and *yawm al-ḥasra* (the day of intense regret) is a day when death will be brought forth and slaughtered!' (*Tafsīr al-Burhān*)

Author's comment: There can be found several reports in the context of the initial verses of this chapter which interpret these verses in respect of *al-walāya*—divine guardianship of the *ahl al-bayt*—such as the report that 'belief' (*al-īmān*) and 'disbelief' (*al-kufr*) are belief and disbelief in the guardianship of the *ahl al-bayt* (*al-walāya*) on the day when the covenant was taken (prior to this-worldly creation), as well as what is transmitted regarding the identity of 'the clear arguments' (*al-bayyināt*) in that it refers to the imāms (from the Prophet's progeny), as well as what is transmitted regarding the identity of 'the light' (*al-nūr*) in that it refers to the imām. All these are in the manner of the inner meaning of the verses (*al-baṭn*) and certainly not as commentary (*al-tafsīr*) of the verses.

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1 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, from Abu Hurayra, from him.

Verses 11-18

This section of the chapter begins with the aim and purpose of this chapter. This happens after the introduction (to this aim and purpose) in the previous section. The aim and purpose of this chapter is to call the Muslims to spend in God's way, and to exhort them to be patient in the face of the problems and misfortunes that afflict them in the course of struggling in God's way.

This section also begins with the mention of the problems and misfortunes (that Muslims face in God's way), and the need to be patient in face of such misfortunes. The reason for such mention here is so that the Muslims may prepare themselves and thereby devote themselves wholeheartedly to the situation in light of what God calls to subsequently in these verses, of spending in His way, and so that excuses are rendered void.

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَ مَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهُ وَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

(64:11) No affliction comes about but by Allah's permission; and whoever believes in Allah, He guides aright his heart; and Allah is Cognizant of all things.

Al-muṣība is a word whose usage has become widespread with respect to evil or bad incidents which accompany harm. The word *al-idhn* means "notification of the permission (for something) and the absence of deterrence or prohibition (regarding the same)." Knowledge of permission (*al-idhn*) (for something) always accompanies what is permitted and authorized, but permission (*al-idhn*) is not the same as knowledge, in contrast to what has been suggested.

Firstly, it becomes apparent from the aforementioned that God's permission regarding an act/deed is a cause from among the causes. It is the clearing of the way between the act/deed and its cause by the removal of obstacles or hindrances that interpose between the act/deed and its cause; obstacles or hindrances which prevent the cause from bringing about the act/deed in light of what is required of the cause due to its causality. For example, fire necessarily burns cotton provided there is no distance between the two and there is no moistness (in the cotton). Thus, the removal of any distance between these two (fire and cotton) and the removal of any moistness, coupled with knowledge of all that, serves as permission (*al-idhn*) for the fire to act or produce an effect on the cotton in a manner which its essence necessitates and requires, which is 'burning'.

The use of the word *al-idhn* (permission) in common parlance is specific to cases where the thing permitted (to bring about an effect) is from the intelligent beings so that the meaning of 'notification' (which forms part of the definition

of *al-idhn*) makes sense conceptually. Thus it is said: 'I permitted such and such a person to do such and such' but it is not said: 'I permitted fire to burn', nor is it said: 'I permitted the horse to gallop'. Nevertheless the Noble Qur'an uses the word *al-idhn* (permission) more widely, legitimizing its use for intelligent and non-intelligent beings, such as the verse *And We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission...* (4:64) (an intelligent being) and the verse *And as for the good land, its vegetation springs forth* (*abundantly*) *by the permission of its Lord...* (A non-intelligent being) (7:58).

It is not implausible that this expansive usage of the word (for both intelligent and non-intelligent beings) is based on what the Qur'an teaches that knowledge and perception apply to (all) existents, as we have presented in the commentary of the verse *And they shall say to their skins: Why have you borne witness against us? They shall say: Allah Who makes everything speak has made us speak....* (41:21).

However it may be, an act from an agent is not accomplished nor is an effect accomplished from an effective agent save by God's permission (*al-idhn*). Therefore, if a cause from the causes is incomplete (meaning) it has obstacles and hindrances to it such that were those obstacles to be actualized, they would hinder the cause to bring about its effect, then God's permission (*al-idhn*) for it would be for Him to bring about the removal of the obstacles. This is while when a cause from the causes is complete, having no obstacles and hindrances to it which may hinder it in bringing about its effect then God's permission (*al-idhn*) for it would be for Him not to bring about anything from the obstacles for it. Consequently, the effect of the cause accompanies (God's) permission (*al-idhn*) without separation.

Secondly, afflictions, which are incidents which afflict the human being and bring about negative and disliked effects, occur by God's permission just as goodness occurs by God's permission. This is due to God's permission accommodating or encompassing the coming about of every effect that ensues from every effective agent/cause.

Thirdly, this permission is creational (*al-takwinī*) permission and not a legislative (*al-tashri'i*) one. It involves the removal of hindrances from the actualization of an act/effect. Therefore, the afflicting of an affliction accompanies God's permission when it occurs even if that affliction is one of the forbidden ones such as afflictions of injustice and oppression. This is because the nature of injustice and oppression being forbidden is from the perspective of legislation (*al-tashrī'*) and not creation (*al-takwīn*).

Therefore, it is impermissible to be patient in the face of some misfortunes and afflictions and it is not permitted to bear them; rather it is necessary for the

human being to resist and fight them as much as possible, such as wrongs and grievances associated with one's reputation and honor, and one's self.

Consequently it becomes apparent from here that the afflictions, in respect of which God has called to patience when these occur, are those regarding which the one afflicted is not instructed to resist them or refuse to bear them, such as general, universal afflictions like death and sickness, which are beyond a human being's choice. On the other hand, those afflictions where choice has a place, such as afflictions associated in some way with human choice, as for example, afflictions associated with human dignity, in such cases the human being must seek to protect himself from them to the best of his ability.

The part of this verse that says *...and whoever believes in Allah, He guides aright his heart....* is understood as follows: The apparent meaning of the previous part of this verse, which says *No affliction comes about but by Allah's permission....* means that God has knowledge and will with respect to the incidents that harm the human being. This means that no affliction afflicts the human being save after God's knowledge of it and His will regarding it. Therefore no natural cause is independent in itself (from God) regarding what it effectuates and influences; rather, it is part of the order of creation, and no lord holds sway over the order of creation save its creator. Therefore no incident or event occurs unless it is with God's knowledge and will, and so nothing will miss the human being when God has willed to afflict him with it, and nothing will afflict him when God has willed that it misses him.

This is the reality that God has explained in another form in the following verse, which is *No evil befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence; surely that is easy to Allah* (57:22). Therefore God is the lord of the universe. The necessary corollary of His general lordship is that He alone owns everything. There is no master apart from Him while the system in place, in existence, is the sum total of the different types of His authority over His creation. Thus no moving being moves, and no motionless being becomes calm and stationary, save with His permission. No creature carries out an act nor does a being, which accepts something, accept it but due to prior knowledge from God and due to His will. His knowledge and will do not err nor is His judgment rejected.

Therefore submitting to God in that He is *Allah* leads to the guidance of the human soul to these realities, and to tranquillity and peace of mind, and to the absence of anxiety and worry with respect to his relationship with apparent causes (since he recognizes that these apparent causes are not independent of God) and with respect to his associating the bitter misfortunes and calamities to the apparent causes rather than to God (since he recognizes that control of

the causes lies with God). This is the meaning of the part of this verse that says *...and whoever believes in Allah, He guides aright his heart....*

It is however also suggested that the meaning of this part of the verse is: 'Whoever believes in God's unity and bears God's command patiently shall have God guide his heart towards the realization that everything ensues from Him and returns to Him, so that he says "we are from God and to Him we are returning."' This meaning consists of including the trait of patience in the meaning of faith.

It is also suggested that this verse means: 'Whoever believes in God shall have God guide his heart to what is necessary for it to do. So if he is afflicted with affliction, he shall bear it patiently and if he is granted blessings, he shall be grateful, and if he is oppressed, he shall forgive.' This interpretation is close to what we have presented.

...and Allah is Cognizant of all things: This serves to emphasise the exception made earlier in this verse where it says *No affliction comes about but by Allah's permission...* It is also possible that this part of the verse alludes to what 57:22 means.

وَ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَ أَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَإِنَّما عَلى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٢﴾

(64:12) And obey Allah and obey the Messenger, but if you turn away, then upon Our Messenger devolves only the clear delivery (of the message).

In this verse the plural imperative '(all of you) obey' (*aṭīʿū*) occurs twice. Its repetition rather than (its occurrence once, to include both God and His Messenger such as) the verse stating 'obey Allah *and* the Messenger' is apparently meant to convey the difference in meaning for the word 'obedience' with respect to them both. The meaning and intent of 'obeying God' (*aṭīʿū allāh*) is to submit to Him regarding what He has legislated for mankind of religious laws and teachings. This is while the meaning of 'obeying the Messenger' (*aṭīʿū al-rasūl*) is to submit to him and to comply with what he instructs due to his leadership of the Muslim community, in light of what God has established of it for him.

The next part of this verse says *...but if you turn back, then upon Our Messenger devolves only the clear delivery* (*of the message*). The word *al-tawallī* means "to turn away" while the word *al-balāgh* means "to convey, to deliver." Therefore the meaning of this part of the verse is: 'If you turn away from obeying God with respect to what He has legislated (for you) or if you turn away from obeying the Messenger with respect to what he instructs you in his capacity as the leader of the matter of your guidance, then Our Messenger shall not coerce

you all to obedience. This is because he was not instructed to do that, rather he was (only) instructed to convey the message, and he has accomplished that.'

From here it becomes apparent that the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad with regards to the rules and laws of the faith is due to his conveying the message of God. Thus the Prophet's command and prohibition, in what he undertakes, are derived from and are God's command and prohibition. Obeying the Prophet's command and prohibition is obeying God, as the absolute nature of the following verse indicates: *And We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission....* (4:64). This verse makes it apparent that obedience to the Messenger in what he commands and prohibits is absolute and unequivocal, permitted to him by God's permission. God's permission in favor of the Messenger's obedience necessitates God's knowledge and will for the Messenger's obedience. And the intent in favor of the obedience of the command and the prohibition is intent in favor of the command and prohibition itself. Therefore, the Prophet Muḥammad's command and prohibition derive from and are God's command and prohibition even if these are with respect to the rules and laws established by God.

The foregoing emphasizes that obedience to the Messenger Muḥammad is obedience to God and is traced back to Him, (and so) the verse at its end undergoes a grammatical shift in discourse (*al-iltifāt*) from third person at the beginning of the verse *And obey Allah and obey the Messenger...* to first person at its end *...then upon Our Messenger....* which in addition, contains trace of a threat to it.

اللَّهُ لا إِلهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ وَ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

(64:13) Allah, there is no god but He; and upon Allah, then, let the believers rely.

This verse serves as a justifying explanation for the necessity to obey God in light of the foregoing, which was that obedience to the Messenger Muḥammad is derived from and is obedience to God. The explanation for that is as follows: obedience, in the sense of submitting to a command and refraining from a prohibition as instructed, is a form of worship and servitude whence the effect of the master owning his slave is that the master owns the slave's will, intent, and deeds. Thus the slave does not intend save what the master desires the slave to intend, nor does the slave carry out an act save what the master wishes him to carry out. Thus obedience is a kind of worship as the following verse points out. *Did I not enjoin you, O children of Adam that you should not worship the Satan? Surely he is your open enemy...* (36:60). In this verse God reprimands the children of Adam for worshipping Satan whereas they had merely obeyed him.

Thus, the obedience of an obedient being in favor of the being obeyed is a kind of worship (by the former) for the latter. Since there is no being worthy of worship save God, therefore there is no obedience save for God or whoever He commands be obeyed. Thus the meaning is: 'all of you obey God since there is no obedience except for the being worthy of worship. And there is no being worthy of worship, in truth, except God, therefore it is imperative on you all to worship Him and not to associate anything with Him by obeying any other apart from Him or by worshipping any other apart from Him such as the Satan or personal whims and fancies.' This is the meaning of the statement made above that this verse serves as a justifying explanation (for what was explained previously in the commentary of the preceding verse).

On the basis of the foregoing, it becomes apparent why God's attribute of divinity (*al-uluhiyya*) (that is, God's description as '*al-ilāh*'—the God—in this verse), which signifies the meaning of Him being worthy of worship, is specifically mentioned here rather than His attribute of being the Lord, Cherisher, and Nourisher (*al-rubūbiyya*). Thus this verse does not say: *Allah, there is no Lord, Cherisher and Nourisher but He* (*allāhu lā rabba ghayruhu*), but instead says *Allah, there is no god but He...* (*allāhu lā ilāha illa huwa*).

The statement *...and upon Allah, then, let the believers rely* serves as emphasis for the meaning of the first half of this verse, which is *Allah, there is no god but He...*

Its explanation is as follows: The word *al-tawkīl* means a person appointing another (the authorized agent) in his stead or in his place with respect to the management of his affairs. The necessary corollary of that is that the authorizing agent situates his will and intent with the will and intent of his authorized agent or renders his will and intent to lie with the will and intent of his authorized agent, and situates his act with his act or renders it to lie with his act. This corresponds, from a perspective, to obedience. This is because a person who submits to and obeys another renders his will and intent, and his act, in accord with the will and intent of the person obeyed. Thus the will and intent of the person obeyed stands in place of the will and intent of the one obeying, while the act of the person obeying is rendered in accord with or in conformity to the will and intent of the one obeyed, and as emanating from such will and intent, from a perspective. Thus, obedience becomes an act of appointment of another from one perspective just as the appointment of another as one's agent is obedience to the latter from a perspective.

Therefore, a slave's obedience towards his lord is to subject his will and intent to comply with the will and intent of his lord, and to accomplish deeds in the same manner. In other words, it is to prefer the will and intent of his

lord and whatever deeds are associated with it, to his own will and intent and whatever deeds are associated with it.

Thus obeying God in respect of what He legislates for His servants and all that which relates to it is in a way, a kind of placing of trust and reliance on Him (*al-tawakkul*). God's obedience is obligatory for whoever knows and recognizes Him and believes in Him. Hence, let the believers rely on God alone, and let them obey Him. As for whoever does not know or recognize Him and does not believe in Him then consequently obedience will not be actualized from such a person.

It has become apparent from the foregoing that faith and virtuous deeds are a kind of placing of trust and reliance in God.

يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْواجِكُمْ وَ أَوْلادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ وَ إِنْ تَعْفُوا وَ تَصْفَحُوا وَ تَغْفِرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾

> (64:14) O you who believe! Surely from among your wives and your children there is an enemy to you; therefore beware of them; and if you pardon and forbear and forgive, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

The preposition *min* (meaning 'from' that occurs in this verse) in *min azwājikum* (and governing *awlādikum* too (*min azwājikum wa* (*min*) *awlādikum*)) denotes partitiveness, something being a part of something, 'some of' (*al-tabʿīḍ*). (Hence, the phrase *min azwājikum wa* (*min*) *awlādikum* means 'from among your wives and children/some of your wives and children'). The context of the discourse in this verse provided by the words *O you who believe* coupled with the mention of or the association of enmity towards them (that is, towards the believers) ...*there is an enemy to you* (from among some of your wives and children) serves as justifying explanation that (some of) the wives and children of the believers bear enmity towards them *because* they (the believers) are believers. Enmity in regards to faith does not materialize save when the enemy is intent on dissuading the believer from faith itself or from virtuous deeds such as dissuading the believer from spending in God's way or dissuading the believer from migrating to the land of belief from that of disbelief or pushing them towards disbelief or grave sins such as rendering them stingy when it comes to spending in God's way by evoking in them compassion for their children and wives, and such as forcing them to appropriate wealth (for the sake of the family) by illegitimate means.

Thus God considers some of the children and wives of the believers as their enemies due to the believers' faith where the former push the latter towards abandoning faith in God or abandoning some virtuous deeds or committing

some grave sins, and perhaps the latter obey the former in some of these issues due to feelings of compassion and love for them. Therefore, God commands the believers to be careful and to be wary of (some of) their wives and children.

The latter half of this verse says *...and if you pardon* (taʿfū) *and overlook* (taṣfaḥū) *and forgive* (taghfirū)*, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.* Al-Rāghib writes: '(The word) *al-ʿafw* means "to intend to take something, the purposing to take something."' He writes: 'It is said *ʿafāhu* and *iʿtafāhu*, which (past tense verbs with their suffix pronouns) mean "he intended or sought him or aimed for him, taking what was with the latter."' Al-Rāghib carries on with his entry till he writes: '(the sentence) *ʿafawtu ʿanhu* means: "I intended or purposed or sought to remove (or take away/efface/erase) his sin (guilt/crime), turning away from him (thereby pardoning him)."' He also writes: 'The word *al-safḥ* means: "abandoning or relinquishing blame and censure, which is superior to *al-ʿafw*. This is why God says *...but pardon* (*faʿfū*) *and overlook* (*waṣfaḥū*)*, till Allah should bring about His command...* (2:109). This is because a person may pardon but not overlook (a wrong) or relinquish blame and censure."'

Al-Rāghib also writes: 'The word *al-ghafr* means "a covering which protects or shields a person from impurity/filth."' (He continues): 'Ensuing from this, it is said: hide (*ighfir*) your garment (*thawbaka*) in the container (*fī al-wiʿāʾ*) (thereby covering it). It is also said: dye (*iṣbagh*) your garment (*thawbaka*) for it is best at hiding/covering (*fa innahu aghfaru*) the filth (*lil-wasikh*) (since it hides/covers up the dirt)'. (He then writes): 'Therefore the words *al-ghufran* and *al-maghfira* in relation to God mean: "He protects and preserves (His) slave from being touched by punishment (by forgiving (covering up/hiding) his sins)." The Qur'an says *ghufrānaka rabbana* (*Thy forgiveness* (*do we crave*) (2:285)), *maghfiratun min rabbikum* (*...forgiveness from your Lord* (3:133)), *wa man yaghfiru al-dhunūba illa allāh* (*...and who forgives the faults but Allah?* (3:135))'.

Therefore, the clause *...and if you pardon and overlook and forgive...* serves as a call in favor of consummate overlooking towards children and wives (of a believer) when something from the traces of the aforementioned enmity appears from them, coupled with care on the believer's part that he should not be tempted by them.

This verse then concludes with *...then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.* If the intent of this part of the verse is God's forgiveness and mercy chiefly for those addressed in this verse in that they pardon, overlook, and forgive, then it serves as a beautiful promise for them in response to their virtuous deed, akin to *...and let them pardon and overlook. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful* (24:22). However, if the intent is God's

general mercy and forgiveness without it being restricted to those addressed in this verse, then it signifies that forgiveness and mercy are from the attributes of God. Thus, if the believers pardon, overlook and forgive, then they have characterized themselves with God's characteristics and attributes and have moulded themselves to God's morals.

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إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾

(64:15) Your possessions and your children are only a trial, and Allah it is with Whom is a great reward.

The word *al-fitna* refers to that by which a person is tested and tried. The reason possessions and children are a test and a trial is because they are the adornments of this life, and the human soul is attracted to and inclines to them both. Consequently, it becomes enchanted by them both and is tempted by them. It gets distracted by them from what (truly) concerns it from the matter of its hereafter and the obedience of its lord. God says *Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world; and the ever-abiding, the good works, are better with your Lord in reward and better in expectation* (18:46).

Your possessions and your children are only a trial is a figure of speech forbidding people to get distracted by possessions and children, forsaking God's side by giving in to them, while the concluding part *...and Allah it is with Whom is a great reward* affirms this.

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فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَ اسْمَعُوا وَ أَطِيعُوا وَ أَنْفِقُوا خَيْراً لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَ مَنْ يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

(64:16) Therefore be careful of (your duty to) Allah as much as you can, and hear and obey and spend, it is better for your souls; and whoever is saved from the greediness of his soul, those it is that are the successful.

The statement, *Therefore be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah as much as you can...* means: 'to the extent of your ability'. This is understood on the basis of the context of this verse for the context is that of calling and inviting to listen to, obey, spend, and struggle for God. This verse occurs as a ramification to the previous verse which said *Your possessions and your children are only a trial, and Allah it is with Whom is a great reward* (64:15). Therefore the meaning obtained is: 'Be careful of your duty to God or be God-conscious and pious to the extent of your ability and do not forsake any aspect of God-consciousness and piety which your strength and effort have the capacity for.' Thus this verse is similar to *O you who believe! Be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah with the care*

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which is due to Him... (3:102). This verse (that is, 64:16) is not about negating the responsibility of being careful of one's duty to God beyond one's capability and strength, as in the verse...*Our Lord do not impose upon us that which we have not the strength to bear...* (2:286).

The following points become clear from the foregoing. Firstly, there is no contradiction between the two verses 64:16 and 3:102. The difference between them is as the difference between quantity and quality (respectively). Thus 64:16, which reads *Therefore be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah as much as you can...* is an instruction in favor of accommodating *all* the instances (quantity), which (a person's) ability to be God-conscious and pious has the capacity for, while 3:102, which reads *O you who believe! Be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah with the care which is due to Him...* (3:102) is an instruction to engage oneself or to get involved and occupy oneself in every instance of God-consciousness and piety as God-consciousness and piety *deserve* without discriminating between them (quality).

Secondly, it is apparent that the opinion of some who maintain that 64:16 abrogates 3:102 is invalid.

The sentence, *...and hear and obey and spend, it is better for your souls...* serves as clarification and emphasis for the preceding part of this verse which was *Therefore be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah as much as you can...* 'Hearing' is a reference to responding positively to and accepting (what is being conveyed), and it is in the position of heartfelt commitment (to what is being conveyed) while 'obedience' is to submit (to what is being conveyed), and it is in the position of the act (that is, actualizing what is being conveyed). 'Spending' refers to generously giving wealth in God's way.

In the phrase, *it is better for your souls* (khayran li-anfusikum), *khayran* is a noun in the accusative case. This is because of an omitted verb that makes *khayran* its object, placing it in the accusative case, as explained in the Qur'anic exegesis *al-Kashshāf*. Consequently, the phrase implicitly means: *āminū khayran li-anfusikum*, or *believe in what is better for your souls*. In this verse, the plural command *anfiqū*—spend, all of you—encompasses a meaning akin to *qaddimū*—present/advance, all of you—as inferred from the context. The verse uses *for your souls* (li-anfusikum) instead of "for you all" (*lakum*) to emphasize the enhanced benefit for the souls of the addressed. Thus, it implies: 'indeed, spending is better for you all. Only your souls reap the benefit due to the way spending cultivates generosity within you and enhances your ability to meet the needs of your societies.'

...and whoever is saved from the greediness of his soul, those it is that are the successful: The commentary of this part has already been made in the

commentary of Sūrah al-Ḥashr.

إِنْ تُقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُضَاعِفْهُ لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ شَكُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧﴾
عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٨﴾

(64:17-18) If you lend to Allah a goodly loan, He will double it for you and forgive you; and Allah is most Ready to appreciate (service), Forbearing. The Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Mighty, the Wise.

The meaning of the phrase 'lending to God' which occurs in this verse means to spend in His way. God has called 'spending in His way' as 'giving a loan to God'. This is while the wealth that is spent (in God's way) is called a 'goodly loan' in order to encourage and urge the believers in favor of this deed. The part of this verse that reads *...He will double it for you and forgive you....* points to the beautiful and wholesome nature of His reward in the world and in the hereafter.

The words *shakūr* (most ready to appreciate) and *ḥalīm* (forbearing) (that occur in 64:17), and the phrase *'ālim al-ghayb wa al-shahāda* (knower of the unseen and the seen), the word *al-'azīz* (the mighty) and the word *al-ḥakīm* (the wise) (that occur in 64:18), are five of God's beautiful names. Their explanation has been given before. The aspect by which these five names have an apt and fitting relationship with what God has instructed in 64:16 regarding hearing, obedience, and spending (in His way) is well apparent.

Examining Narrations

(1) Abu Ja'far al-Bāqir said with respect to *...Surely from among your wives and your children there is an enemy to you; therefore beware of them....* (64:14): 'That was when a man intended to migrate to the Messenger of God. His child and wife would cling to him and say: "We implore and beg you by God not to go away from us and leave us for then we would perish after you." Among these men was one who would give in to his family and stay. Thus God warns such men to beware of their children and wives and forbids them to obey and give in to them. And among them was one who would depart, leaving his family, telling them: "By God! If you all did not migrate with me, and subsequently God gathers us together in the abode of migration, I will not avail you with anything, ever!" Thus when God gathered them together, He commanded the one who had emigrated (despite his family) to deal mercifully with them and to show regard for them by discharging his duties to them in full, to do good to them, and to maintain ties with

them for fear of God. Thus He said *...and if you pardon and forbear and forgive, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful* (64:14).'[1]

Author's comment: The same meaning has been cited in the Qur'an commentary *Al-Durr al-manthūr* (by al-Suyūṭī) from a number of major hadith compilers, from Ibn ʿAbbās.

(2) The Prophet Muḥammad said with respect to *Your possessions and your children are only a trial and a temptation....* (64:15): 'There is a trial for every community and the trial of my community is wealth and possessions'.[2]

Author's comment: A report similar to this one has also been transmitted (by al-Suyūṭī) on the authority of Ibn Mardawayhi, from Kaʿb ibn ʿIyāḍ, from the Prophet Muḥammad.

(3) Burayda reports: 'The Prophet was delivering a sermon (once) when al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn arrived. Both of them had on a (long) red shirt. They were walking and falling (as they tottered ahead). The Messenger of God came down from the pulpit and carried them both, one on one side and the other on the other side. Then he went up the pulpit and said: "God has said the truth. He said *Your possessions and your children are only a trial and a temptation...* (64:15) When I saw these two boys walking and falling (as they tottered ahead), I did not wait (patiently). I interrupted my speech and came down to them (from the pulpit).'[3]

Author's comment: The report is not devoid of criticism for wherefrom would temptation overwhelm the Prophet when he is the leader of (all) the sincere prophets, is infallible, as well as aided by the Holy Spirit?!

Far more atrocious than this report is the one he (al-Suyūṭī) cites from Ibn Mardawayhi from ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar that the Messenger of God was in the midst of delivering a sermon to the people from the pulpit when al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī came out. He tripped on his garment and fell to the ground and began to cry. The Messenger of God came down from the pulpit. When the people saw this, they rushed to al-Ḥusayn and taking him up in their arms, passed him one to the other, contending together in doing that, till he (al-Ḥusayn) reached the arms of the Messenger of God, whereupon the Messenger of God said: 'May God fight the Satan! Surely one's child is a temptation and a trial! I

1 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, the transmission of Abu al-Jārūd from him.

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Mardawayhi, from ʿUbāda ibn al-Ṣāmit and ʿAbdullah ibn Abī Awfā, from him.

3 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Abī Shayba, Aḥmad, Abu Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāi, Ibn Māja, al-Ḥākim, and Ibn Mardawayhi, from him.

swear by the One in whose grasp lies my life, I did not realize I had come down from my pulpit!'

Similar to this report is the one from Ibn al-Mundhir from Yaḥyā ibn Abī Kathīr who said: The Prophet heard al-Ḥasan or al-Ḥusayn crying, whereupon he said: 'The child is a temptation and a trial. I had betaken myself to him without realizing it!' The position regarding such reports is to discard them unless they can be re-interpreted.

(4) Abd Khayr reports: I asked ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib about *O you who believe! Be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah with the care which is due to Him...* (3:102). He said: 'By God! None has acted on this verse save the members of the house of the Messenger of God (*ahlu bayti rasūlillah*). We remember God and we do not forget Him. We thank and are grateful to Him and are never ever ungrateful to Him. We obey Him and do not disobey Him. When this verse was revealed, the (Prophet's) companions protested: "We are incapable of that!" whereupon the following was revealed by God *Therefore be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah as much as you can...* (64:16).'[1]

(5) Al-Faḍl ibn Abi Murrah relates: 'I saw Abu ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) circling (the Kaʿba) from the beginning of the night till morning, and he was supplicating with the words: "O God! Protect me from the greediness of my soul." So I said to him: "May I be ransomed for you. I did not see you supplicate (the entire night) save with this supplication!" He replied: "Which thing is worse than the greediness of the soul? Surely God says ...*and whoever is saved from the greediness of his soul, those it is that are the successful...* (64:16)"'[2]

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1 *Tafsīr al-Burhān* from Ibn Shahr-Ashūb, from the Qur'an commentary of Wakiʿ, from Sufyān ibn Murrah al-Hamadānī, from him.

2 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, on the authority of his father, from him.

Chapter 65

Sūrah Al-Talāq

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Introduction

This chapter provides an overall explanation of the rulings of divorce, followed by an admonition and warning and a promise of glad tidings. The context indicates that it is Medinan.

Verses 1-7

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاء فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ وَأَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ
لا تُخْرِجُوهُنَّ مِن بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلا يَخْرُجْنَ إِلاَّ أَن يَأْتِينَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ
وَمَن يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ لا تَدْرِي لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْرًا ۝١

(65:1) O Prophet! When you divorce women, divorce them for their prescribed time, and calculate the number of the days prescribed, and be careful of (your duty to) God, your Lord. Do not drive them out of their houses, nor should they themselves go forth, unless they commit an open indecency; and these are the limits of God, and whoever goes beyond the limits of God, he indeed does injustice to his own soul. You do not know; perhaps God will bring something new to pass thereafter.

It first addresses the Prophet since he is the messenger to the community and their leader. Therefore, it is acceptable for it to address him but include both him and his followers in his nation. It is common usage for the leader of a group to be addressed when speaking of of matters aimed in general at his people. Therefore, there is no reason to say—as some exegetes have—that the verse means, "O prophet! Tell your community, 'When you have divorced women....'"

When you divorce women, divorce them for their prescribed time: Meaning that if you want to divorce women and are about to do that, since it would be meaningless to say *divorce them* after they had actually been divorced. This is

similar to the verse *when you have stood for prayer, then wash* (5:6).[1]

The *prescribed time* ('iddah) of a woman is the time when she refrains from remarriage until the waiting time has elapsed, as ordained by Islamic law. "Divorcing them for their prescribed time" means that the divorce occurs over the duration of their *'iddah*, beginning with the day that the divorce is reckoned. The divorce must begin at a time of her cycle when she is not menstruating and while they have not had intercourse during that cycle, and ends when her cycles have elapsed (for the *'iddah*).

And calculate the number of the days prescribed: Meaning, count the cycles for the *'iddah* since, during the time, the woman has the right to financial maintenance and shelter from her husband, and the husband has the right to return to her.

And be careful of (your duty to) God, your Lord. Do not drive them out of their houses: According to the apparent meaning of the context, *do not drive them out* is an appositive (*badal*)[2] for *be careful of* (*your duty to*) *God, your Lord.* This is signified by the repetition of *do not* in *do not drive them out*. *Their houses* refers to the houses they were living in before the divorce; these houses are referred to as "their" (in the feminine plural) because it is where they live.[3]

Nor should they themselves go forth: This forbids them from leaving, just as the previous clause forbade them from being expelled.

Unless they commit an open indecency: Meaning, an obvious indecency, like adultery or obscenity, or if she is harassing the other members of the household, as has been mentioned in narrations related from the Imams of the family of the Prophet.

And these are the limits of God, and whoever goes beyond the limits of God, he indeed does injustice to his own soul: The *limits of God* are the aforementioned ordinances for divorce. Through them, God has constrained your actions. A person who transgresses the limits of God, either by neglecting to observe them or by violating them, has wronged his own soul—meaning that he has disobeyed his Lord.

You do not know; perhaps God will bring something new (amran) ***to pass***

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1 Meaning, the verse is saying to wash when you are about to pray, not after you have already started the prayer. The grammatical construction is the same in both verses. (Trans.)

2 Badal, i.e. replacing one term with another term to introduce and focus on the second. (Trans.)

3 'Allāmah appears to be conceptualizing the home as the property of the husband, and therefore explaining why the Qur'an might instead refer to the home as belonging to the wife. (Trans.)

thereafter: Meaning, God might change the husband's mind or heart about the divorce by turning his heart towards reconciliation, love, and a desire to return to the previous situation (i.e. the marriage).

فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَأَشْهِدُوا ذَوَيْ عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَن كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُ مَخْرَجًا ﴿٢﴾

(65:2) So when they have reached their prescribed time, then retain them with kindness or separate from them with kindness, and call to witness two men of justice from among you, and give upright testimony for God. With that is admonished he who believes in God and the latter day; and whoever is careful of (his duty to) God, He will make for him a way out.

"Reaching their prescribed time" means "nearing the end of their *ʿiddah*." "Retaining them" (*amsikūhunna*) is a figure of speech for "returning to them," and "separating from them" (*fāriqūhunna*) means "leaving them to complete the *ʿiddah*."

"Retaining them with kindness" means to treat them nicely and observe the rights that God has ordained for them. "Separating from them with kindness" also means observing her rights in Islamic law. "Kindness" (*maʿrūf*) means "in accordance with the custom that Islamic law has ordained."[1]

And call to witness two men of justice from among you: Meaning, have two of your just companions witness the divorce. The meaning of "justice" was explained in the commentary on Sūrah al-Baqarahh.

And give upright testimony for God: This was explained in the commentary on Sūrah al-Baqarahh.

With that is admonished he who believes in God and the latter day: This refers to what was previously mentioned about being mindful of God and bearing witness uprightly for the sake of God, and the prohibition against transgressing the divine limits. Either that, or it can be taken to refer to everything that has come before, including the divine ordinances, the call to be mindful of and sincere to God when bearing witness, and the exhortation against transgressing the divine limits. It thereby exhorts the faithful to rely on the truth and weed out falsehood. It also hints that turning away from or changing the

1 The word maʿrūf, here translated as "kindness" as per the Shakir's translation of the Qur'an, also relates to the word ʿurf, which means both "kindness" and "common custom." (Trans.)

divine ordinances takes one out of the pale of faith.

And whoever is careful of (his duty to) God, He will make for him a way out: If someone is *careful* (*of his duty to*) *God*, shies away from what God has prohibited, observes the divine limits, respects the divine shari'ah, and acts, according to it, then God *will make for him a way out* from the travails of life, for the shari'ah suits human nature. Through it, God guides man regarding the demands of human nature and fulfils his needs, and it secures his happiness here and in the hereafter.

وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا ﴿٣﴾

(65:3) And give him sustenance from whence he thinks not; and whoever trusts in God, He is sufficient for him; surely God attains His purpose; God indeed has appointed a measure for everything.

Meaning, *and give him sustenance* with a spouse, wealth, and everything required for a wholesome life and the purity of life *from whence he thinks not* or anticipate. Therefore, the faithful do not fear that if they are mindful of God and respect God's limits, they will be barred from a good life and will be afflicted with poverty, since sustenance is guaranteed, and God is able to fulfil His promises.

And whoever trusts in God by setting aside their own desires and taking control of himself, preferring Allah's will over their own, and does what God wills rather than what he wants, or in other words, adopting Allah's religion and acting according to His rulings, *then He is sufficient for him*, meaning sufficient for what they desire from a good life and the happiness they naturally wish for, not their false imaginations.

This is because God is the ultimate cause, whom all other causes return to. When He will something, He causes it, and enacts His will, without any change in it. He says: *The Word changes not before Me* (50: 29). No obstacle block Him from enacting His will; he says: *God decrees, and no one rolls back His decree* (13:41). As for other causes that humans cling to for fulfilling their needs, they only have as much causality as God has granted them. He is the owner of what they possess and capable of what He has empowered them for, and they can only act as much as God has permitted.

Therefore, God suffices whoever trusts in Him, and no one else. *God attains his purpose* however He wills. *His command is such that whenever He wills something, he but says to it "Be," and it is* (36:82); *God indeed has appointed a measure for everything* (65:3). There is naught which is not measured or limited (by God), whereas God has no limit our bound; rather, He encompasses all things.

This is what the verse means, if it is examined in the context of the verses on divorce. However, if one looks at it in and of itself, without being restrained by the context, it can be gleaned from *and whoever is careful of* (*his duty to*) *God, He will make for him a way out and give him sustenance from whence he thinks not* (65:2-3) that if someone truly is mindful of God—and that can only be attained through knowing God through His names and attributes—and therefore avoids performing forbidden acts or neglecting required acts, sincerely for His sake, then that person will reach the point whereby he only wills to do or refrain from doing what God wills. That person's will necessarily will be dissolved in the divine will, and so the only actions that will issue forth from him are those which issue forth from the divine will.

Furthermore, as a corollary, he will see himself and all his components—such as traits or acts—as belonging solely to God, who may employ them as He wills. This is the *wilāyah* (guardianship) of God, through which He looks after His servant. The person will not retain any thing of his own; rather, he will ascribe all to God, for He is the true owner of what is owned, and the kingdom belongs to God, mighty be His name.

Thereupon, God saves him from constricting delusions and the imprisonment of assigning external causes as partners to God. *He will make for him a way out and give him sustenance from whence he thinks not*. As for material sustenance, the person would have seen it before as resulting from his own efforts and external causes, which he used to put his faith in, not knowing that these external causes were but a fraction of what was going on, like a firebrand that a person carries on a dark night to see where he is stepping but who cannot see anything beyond. However, God encompasses all causes and manages them however He wills, and permits things to take effect that the person has no knowledge of.

However, spiritual sustenance is the true type of sustenance which sustains the human being and remains. This is something that the person could neither have known of nor imagined how it arrives at him.

All in all, God looks after that person's situation, removes him from the locus of destruction, and sustains him from whence he knows not. In His perfection, he omits nothing—none of the blessings which this person used to hope to attain through his own efforts—since this person has fully put his trust in God and ceded his affairs to Him. *And whoever trusts in God, He is sufficient for him*; he trusts in Him rather than other apparent causes which are hit and miss. *Surely God attains His purpose*, because He bounds all things. *God indeed has appointed a measure for everything*; it is not outside His power to apportion them.

This is the share of the righteous friends of God (*awliyā'*), according to the verse.

As for those who are below them, such as the average faithful who are mindful of God but who have a lower degree of understanding of God and a lower degree of acts, they shall receive from God's *wilāyah* what is suitable for their position with respect to sincerity, faith, and righteous acts. God has said unconditionally: *God is the guardian* (walī) *of the faithful* and *God is the guardian* (walī) *of the certain* (45:19).

By following the religion of truth—which is the path of life—and coming to act as God wills—which is mindfulness of God (*taqwā*) and trust in God (*tawakkul*), through replacing their own will with His will—they attain happiness in life accordingly, and God makes a way out for them and sustains them from whence they knew not. Their Lord suffices them; He attains His command, and has apportioned all things.

As long as *shirk* (associating partners with God) creeps into their faith and deeds, they must endure some deprivation of happiness, for God has said: *Most of them do not believe in God; rather, they are associating partners with Him* (12:106). God has also said unconditionally: *God does not forgive that partners be associated with Him* (4:48).

God says: *I forgive whoever repents, has faith, and does righteous deeds* (20:82). God also says unconditionally: *Seek forgiveness in God; God is forgiving, merciful* (73:20).

Therefore, the faithful will only ascend degrees towards the *wilāyat* of God through repenting from the hidden *shirk* which lay beneath.

This verse is one of the most outstanding Qur'anic verses; exegetes have said many things about it, which we have abstained from here.

وَاللَّائِي يَئِسْنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيضِ مِن نِّسَائِكُمْ إِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ أَشْهُرٍ وَاللَّائِي لَمْ يَحِضْنَ وَأُولَاتُ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجَلُهُنَّ أَن يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا ﴿٤﴾

(65:4) And (as for) those of your women who have despaired of menstruation, if you have a doubt (*irtabtum*), their prescribed time shall be three months, and of those too who have not had their courses; and (as for) the pregnant women, their prescribed time is that they lay down their burden; and whoever is careful of (his duty to) God He will make easy for him his affair.

Irtiyāb (the noun form of the verb *irtabtum*) refers to doubt over whether or not they will have menstrual cycles, whether due to old age or some other

reason. It means: Those women who do not expect to get a menstrual cycle, or who are uncertain whether they will or not, whether that is due to old age or some other reason, should observe an *ʿiddah* of three months.

And of those too who have not had their courses is linked to *And* (*as for*) *those of your women who have despaired of menstruation* by the conjunction *and*. It means: Those women who have not yet menstruated, although they are at the age of menstruation, should observe an *ʿiddah* of three months.

And** (**as for**) **the pregnant women, their prescribed time is that they lay down their burden: Meaning, their *ʿiddah* ends when they deliver.

And whoever is careful of** (**his duty to**) **God He will make easy for him his affair: Meaning, the hardships he faces will be made easy for him. Some say that it means that both worldly and otherworldly matters will be made easy for him, either through immediate relief or compensation in the hereafter.

ذَٰلِكَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ أَنزَلَهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ۚ وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا ۝٥

(65:5) That is the command of God which He has revealed to you, and whoever is careful of (his duty to) God, He will remove from him his evil and give him a big reward.

The statement, *That is the command of God which He has revealed to you* means the rulings that were revealed to you in the previous verses.

The clause, *and whoever is careful of* (*his duty to*) *God, He will remove from him his evil and give him a big reward* indicates that carrying out the divine command is part of piety (*taqwā*), just as avoiding the forbidden things is also part of piety. Possibly, this indicates that carrying out the divine command necessitates avoiding its neglect.

"Removing from him his evil" means covering his wrong deeds with forgiveness. *Evil* refers to the lesser sins; greater transgressions remain in the face of piety (*taqwā*). These two verses can be read together to understand their meaning better: *And whoever is careful of* (*his duty to*) *God, He will remove from him his evil and give him a big reward* (65:5) and *If you avoid the greater* (*sins*) *which you have been forbidden from, We shall cover your misdeeds and cause you to enter an honorable place of entering* (4:31).

From the two verses, it is clear that "the forbidden" what has been narrated about the definition of piety (*taqwā*)—that is, it is "avoiding what God has forbidden"—means abstaining from the greater sins which God has forbidden.

Clearly, also, violating the divinely revealed commands regarding divorce and the *ʿiddah* is doubtlessly a greater sin, since *taqwā* as mentioned in the verse includes what observing was said about divorce and the *ʿiddah*. Violating this would not be one of the misdeeds that would be overlooked, unless one tinkers

with the meaning of the verse.

أَسْكِنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنتُم مِّن وُجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَارُّوهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ وَإِن كُنَّ أُولَاتِ حَمْلٍ فَأَنفِقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتَّى يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ وَأْتَمِرُوا بَيْنَكُم بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَإِن تَعَاسَرْتُمْ فَسَتُرْضِعُ لَهُ أُخْرَى ﴿٦﴾

(65:6) Lodge them where you lodge according to your means, and do not injure them in order that you may straiten them; and if they are pregnant, spend on them until they lay down their burden; then if they suckle for you, give them their recompense and enjoin one another among you to do good; and if you disagree, another (woman) shall suckle for him.

Al-Mufradāt says:

> *According to your means* (min wujdikum) means "your ability" and "in accordance with your wealth." *Wijdān* and *jiddah* are both used as expressions for wealth. The word forms *wajd*, *wijd*, and *wujd* are all used with each of the three vowels after the letter *w*.

The context indicates that the pronoun *them* (*-hunna*, feminine plural) refers to the divorced women. It means: Lodge the divorced women where you live, in accordance with your capability and wealth; the rich in accordance with his means, and the poor in accordance with his means.

And do not injure them in order that you may straiten them: Meaning, do not cause hardship for them in providing their lodging, clothing, and financial upkeep as a means of making things difficult for them.

And if they are pregnant, spend on them until they lay down their burden: The meaning is clear.

Then if they suckle for you, give them their recompense: She should be paid for suckling; this is part of the financial upkeep due from the father to the child.

And enjoin one another (**a'tamirū**) ***among you to do good:*** *I'timār* means for a group of people to consult each other about something and tell each other to follow through. This is addressing both the man and the woman. That is, they should consult with each other about their child and come to an agreement in accordance with custom so that the man is not harmed through having to pay excessively for financial upkeep, the woman is not financially deprived, and the child is not deprived of a full period of suckling; nor is any other sort of harm experienced.

And if you disagree, another (*woman*) *shall suckle for him*: Meaning, if each of them wants from the other something that would cause hardship, and they disagree, then the father can hire a different woman (not the mother) to

suckle the child.

لِيُنفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ لا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلاَّ مَا آتَاهَا سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا ﴿٧﴾

(65:7) Let him who has abundance spend out of his abundance and whoever has his means of subsistence straitened to him, let him spend out of that which God has given him; God does not lay on any soul a burden except to the extent to which He has granted it; God brings about ease after difficulty.

Let him who has abundance spend out of his abundance: A man who has abundant wealth should spend abundantly. This is a command to the rich: that they should spend openhandedly on their divorced women who are suckling their children.

Whoever has his means of subsistence straitened to him, let him spend out what God has given him **(atāhu)***:* Meaning his money is tight. *Ītā'* means *i'ṭā'* ("giving"). Those who are poor, with strained means, and cannot give generously should give of their wealth in accordance with what God has provided them. That is, they should provide financial upkeep as they are able.

God does not lay on any soul a burden except to the extent to which He has granted it: Meaning, God is only requiring them to pay in accordance with their ability and is not burdening them with more. In other words, it says there should be no hardship in fulfilling religious responsibilities, one of which is paying upkeep to divorced women.

The ending clause, *God brings about ease after difficulty* is encouraging and reassuring.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Mardawayh that Ibn Sa'īd al-Khudrī said: The short chapter about women (*Sūrah al-nisā' al-quṣrā*) was revealed seven years after Sūrah al-Baqarahh.

Author's comment: The "short chapter about women" is Sūrah al-Ṭalāq.

(2) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related:[1]

Ibn 'Umar divorced his wife while she was menstruating. He told that to the Messenger of God, who grew angry, then said, "Take her back, and be intimate with her until her period ends, and then she has another

1 This is related from Mālik, al-Shāfi'ī, 'Abd al-Razzāq in his Muṣannaf, Aḥmad, 'Abd ibn Ḥamīd, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhīr, Abū Ya'lā, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in his Sunan.

period which ends. Then, if you want to divorce her, divorce her while she is not on her period, and before resuming relations after her period. This is the *ʿiddah* which God commanded for divorcing women." Then the Prophet recited this verse: "*O Prophet! When you divorce women, divorce them in the face of their prescribed time* (*fa-ṭalliqūhunna fī qubul ʿiddatihinna*, 65:1)."

Author's comment: *Fī qubul ʿiddatihinna* is Ibn ʿUmar's recitation of this, but the standard copy of the Qur'an says *li-ʿiddatihinna* (*for their prescribed time*) instead.

(3) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from Ibn al-Mundhir, from Ibn Sīrīn, regarding *perhaps God will bring something new to pass thereafter* (65:1):

This was about Ḥafṣah, the daughter of ʿUmar. The Prophet divorced her a single time. Then the verse was revealed: *O Prophet! When you divorce women... perhaps God will bring something new to pass thereafter* (65:1), so he took her back.

(4) In *Al-Kāfī*, with its chain of narration, it is related from Zurārah:

Imām al-Bāqir said, "Any divorce which is neither of the *sunnah* (the way of the Prophet) nor of the *ʿiddah* is baseless."

Zurārah said, "Explain to me the divorce of the *sunnah* and the divorce of the *ʿiddah*."

He (Imām al-Bāqir) said, "The divorce of the *sunnah* is when a man wants to divorce a woman, so he waits until she gets her period and it ends. When her period is over, before engaging in intercourse with her, he divorces her, and two witnesses bear witness to that. Then he abstains from (intercourse with) her until she has two more periods, and her *ʿiddah* finishes at the third, at which time the divorce is finalized. Then, if he wishes to remarry her, he can seek her hand like any other suitor, and she can accept or reject, as she likes. It is his responsibility to pay for her financial upkeep and lodging during that time, and they inherit from each other until the *ʿiddah* finishes.

"The divorce of the *ʿiddah* is what God says: *divorce them for their prescribed time, and calculate the number of the days prescribed* (65:1). When a man from among you wants to divorce his wife through the divorce of the *ʿiddah*, he should wait until she has her period and it finishes. Then, before having conjugal relations with her, he should pronounce the divorce; two just witnesses should bear witness to the divorce. He can take her back immediately; that is better. Or he can take her back at any time before she menstruates; two witnesses should bear witness

that she has returned to him, and he should engage in intercourse with her. She remains with him until she has her period; after she has her period and her period finishes, before having intercourse with her, he then pronounces a second divorce. Witness should be borne to that. He may take her back whenever he likes before she gets her period again. Two witnesses should bear witness to her return, and he should have intercourse with her. She remains with him until she gets her period a third time, and after her period finishes, before having intercourse with her, if he pronounces a third divorce, and this is borne witness to, then the divorce is finalized, and it is not lawful for him to remarry her unless she marries a different husband (and then that marriage ends)."

He (Imām al-Bāqir) was asked, "What if she does not experience menstrual cycles?"

He (Imām al-Bāqir) said, "This is done similar to the divorce of the *sunnah*."

(5) In *Qurb al-Isnād*, it is related via a chain of narration from Ṣafwān:

I heard that a man came and asked him—that is, Imām al-Ṣādiq—"I have divorced my wife three times in a single sitting."

He said, "This is invalid. Have you read the Book of God? *O Prophet! When you divorce women, divorce them for their prescribed time... unless they commit an open indecency* (65:1). Do you not know that *perhaps God will bring something new to pass thereafter* (65:1)? Anything which contradicts the Book of God and the way of the Prophet (*sunnah*) should be returned to the Book of God and the way of the Prophet."

(6) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, regarding *do not drive them out of their houses... unless they commit an open indecency* (65:1), it says:

It is not lawful for a man to expel his wife from his house after he divorces her while he still has the right to return to her. It is also not lawful for her to leave his house. This is unless she has committed a flagrant indecency. "Indecency" (*fāḥishah*) means that she commits adultery or steals from the man. It also includes being impudent towards her husband. If she does any of that, he may expel her.

(7) In *Al-Kāfī*, it is related via a chain of narration from Wahab ibn Ḥafṣ, that Imām al-Bāqir or Imām al-Ṣādiq said about a divorced woman:

She should remain in her home and adorn herself for her husband; *perhaps God will bring something new to pass thereafter* (65:1).

Author's comment: There are many other narrations from the Imāms of the family of the Prophet with a similar meaning about this verse as well as both verses that we have been discussing.

(8) In *Al-Kāfī*, it is related via a chain of narration from Muʿāwiyah ibn Wahab that Imām al-Ṣādiq said:
Whoever is blessed with three things will never be deprived of three things: whoever is blessed with prayerfulness will be given a response, whoever is blessed with gratitude will be given more, and whoever is blessed with trust in God will be sufficed. Have you recited the Book of God, the mighty and glorious? *Whoever trusts in God, He is sufficient for him* (65:3). And He said: *if you are grateful, We shall give you more* (14:7). And He said: *Call upon Me, and I shall respond to you* (40:60).

(9) In *Al-Kāfī*, it is related from Muḥammad ibn Muslim:
I asked Imām al-Ṣādiq about: *and whoever is careful of* (*his duty to*) *God, He will make for him a way out, and give him sustenance from whence he thinks not* (65:2-3). He said, "In his worldly affairs."

(10) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from ʿAbd ibn Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, that Sālim ibn Abī al-Jaʿd said:
The verse *and whoever is careful of* (*his duty to*) *God, He will make for him a way out* (65:2) was revealed about a member of the Ashjaʿ tribe who suffered from poverty. The enemy had captured his son, so he went to the Prophet, who said, "Be mindful (have *taqwā*) of God, and be patient."
His son who had been captured was returned to him; God had freed him. He had acquired some goats, and brought them with him.[1] When news of this reached the Prophet, this verse was revealed, and the Prophet said, "These (goats) are yours."

(11) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from Ibn ʿAbbās regarding *and whoever is careful of* (*his duty to*) *God, He will make for him a way out* (65:2):[2]
From the uncertainties of this world, the pangs of death, and the hardships of the Day of Resurrection.

(12) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related that Abū Dharr said:[3]
The Messenger of God began to recite this verse: *and whoever is careful of* (*his duty to*) *God, He will make for him a way out, and give him sustenance from whence he thinks not* (65:2-3) and then repeated it until I felt drowsy, whereupon he said, "O Abū Dharr! If all people held to

1 Translator's note: According to *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, he had captured these goats from the enemy, but was unsure whether or not he was allowed to keep the goats.

2 This is related from Abū Yaʿlā, Abū Nuʿaym, and al-Daylamī, through ʿAṭāʾ ibn Yasār, from Ibn ʿAbbās.

3 This is related from al-Ḥākim (who authenticated it), Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī.

this, it would suffice them."

(13) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related that ʿImrān ibn Ḥaṣīn said:[1]
The Messenger of God said, "Whoever cuts off (reliance on anyone other than) God, God shall suffice him in all of his needs, and shall grant him sustenance from whence he knows not. And whoever cuts off (reliance on anything other than) the world, God leaves him to it (the world)."

(14) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, from Ibn ʿAbbās, who relates, without mentioning the intervening chain of narration, that the Prophet had said:
Whoever wants to be the strongest person should trust in God. Whoever wants to be the wealthiest person should trust more in what is in the hands of God than what is in his own hands. And whoever wants to be the most respected person should fear (have *taqwā* of) God.

Author's comment: The meaning of these narrations has already been discussed at the end of the discussion about the verses.

(15) In *Al-Kāfī*, it is related from al-Ḥalabī:
Imām al-Ṣādiq said: "The *ʿiddah* of a woman who does not experience menstrual cycles and the woman who bleeds continually is three months. The *ʿiddah* of a woman who has irregular cycles is three cycles."
I asked him about the verse *if you have a doubt* (65:4). "What is the doubt about?"
He said, "Whatever (menstrual) bleeding exceeds a month is a doubt, so (if she bleeds for more than a month), she should count three months (for the *ʿiddah*) and not pay attention to her menstrual cycles."

(16) In *Al-Kāfī*, with a chain of narration from Muḥammad ibn Qays, it is related that Imām al-Bāqir said:
The *ʿiddah* of a pregnant woman lasts until she delivers the baby. Her husband must pay her upkeep in a conventional manner until she delivers.

(17) In *Al-Kāfī*, it is related via a chain of narration from Abū al-Ṣabāḥ al-Kanānī that Imām al-Bāqir said:
If a man divorces his wife while she is pregnant, he must pay financial maintenance to her until she delivers the baby. After she delivers, he should pay her (for suckling) and not harm her unless he finds a woman who will suckle the baby for a cheaper price. If she (the mother) agrees to that price, then she has a greater right to suckle her own child.

(18) In *al-Faqīh*, it is related via a chain of narration from Rubʿī ibn ʿAbd

1 This is related from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarānī, and al-Khaṭīb.

Allāh and al-Fuḍayl ibn Yasār regarding this verse: *whoever has his means of subsistence straitened to him, let him spend out of that which God has given him* (65:7)

If he can take care of her bare necessities for food and clothing. If he cannot, they should separate.

Author's comment: This is also narrated from him in *Al-Kāfī* with a chain of narration from Abū Baṣīr.

(19) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it says regarding *and* (*as for*) *the pregnant women, their prescribed time is that they lay down their burden* (65:4):

The waiting period for a pregnant divorced woman continues until she delivers what is in her womb. If she delivers it on the day that her husband divorces her, then she can remarry as soon as the post-partum bleeding has ended. If she delivers nine months later, she cannot remarry until after her delivery.

(20) In *Al-Kāfī*, it is related via a chain of narration from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥajjāj from Abū al-Ḥasan:[1]

I asked him about what happens when a man divorces a woman who is pregnant, and she miscarries—either a stillbirth of a fully developed child, or an incompletely developed child, or an embryo.

He said, "As long as it is clear that her pregnancy has ended, anything she delivers marks the end of her *ʿiddah*, whether or not it is fully formed."

(21) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from Ibn al-Mundhir from Mughīrah:

I told al-Shaʿbī, "I cannot believe that ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib used to say that the *ʿiddah* of a widow is the longer of the two time spans."[2]

He replied, "No; rather, you should believe it more firmly than anything else, since ʿAlī used to say that the verse *and* (*as for*) *the pregnant women, their prescribed time is that they lay down their burden* (65:4) is about divorced women (not widows)."

(22) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from ʿAbd al-Razzāq from ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUtbah:

Abu ʿAmr ibn Ḥafṣ al-Mughīrah went to Yemen with ʿAlī, and wrote

1 Translator's note: "Abū al-Ḥasan" here likely refers to Imām al-Kāẓim but could refer to Imām al-Riḍā.

2 Translator's note: That is, her *ʿiddah* lasts for either four months and ten days, or—if she is pregnant—until her pregnancy completes; whichever is longer. This is in contradistinction to the four main Sunni schools of law, which hold that the *ʿiddah* of a pregnant woman who loses her husband ends after her pregnancy completes, even if it is shorter than four months and ten days.

to his wife Fāṭimah bint Qays telling her that he had divorced her. This was her last divorce (that is, it was the third time that he had divorced her.) He ordered al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām and ʿAbbās ibn Abī Rabīʿah to pay maintenance to her, but they left her to her own devices and told her, "By God! You will receive no maintenance unless you are pregnant." (And she was not pregnant.)

So she went to the Prophet and told him what had happened. He told her, "You do not receive financial maintenance." She asked for permission to move (out of her former husband's house), and he granted that. Marwān wrote to her asking her about what had happened. After she told him, Marwān said, "I have never heard of such a thing, not from about one woman. May we be protected from what the people are doing!"[1]

Fāṭimah said, "Between me and you is the book of God, the Mighty and Glorious." (She recited:) "*Do not drive them out of their houses*" until she reached "*unless they commit an open indecency*" and then continued to "*You do not know; perhaps God will bring something new to pass thereafter*" (65:1).

Then she said, "This is about a woman whose husband can still take her back. But what about a woman who has received the third divorce? And how are you all saying 'you will not receive any financial maintenance unless you are pregnant' while you are going to imprison her and leave her to herself (during the *ʿiddah*) until she has the (final) period and it finishes? If she menstruates, her *ʿiddah* is three cycles, and if she does not menstruate, then her *ʿiddah* is three months. And if she is pregnant, then her *ʿiddah* is until she delivers. If, before the end of her *ʿiddah*, her husband wants to take her back, two men can bear witness to this. God says: *And call to witness two men of justice from among you* (65:2) when there is a divorce and when a man takes back his wife. Then, if she returns to him, she can stay with him for two more pronouncements of divorce. If he does not take her back, then her *ʿiddah* finishes at the last pronouncement of divorce, and she can do what she likes with herself, and marry whoever she pleases, either him or someone else."

1 Translator's note: It seems he is shocked that the Prophet allowed her to move out of her former husband's home.

Verses 8-12

These verses serve as an admonition, a warning, and glad tidings, emphasizing the importance of adhering to the laws that God has established, particularly those related to divorce and the waiting period (*'iddah*). The Qur'an uniquely highlights and stresses the importance of laws regarding women, more than any other set of legislated rulings. This specific focus is due to the significant implications these laws hold.

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهِ فَحَاسَبْنَاهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيدًا وَعَذَّبْنَاهَا عَذَابًا نُّكْرًا ﴿٨﴾

(65:8) And how many a town (*qaryatin*) which rebelled (*'atat*) against the commandment of its Lord and His messengers, so We called it to account severely and We chastised it (with) a stern chastisement (*nukran*).

Al-Rāghib says: "*Al-'utuw* means to be recalcitrant regarding obedience." It is near in meaning to *istikbār* (arrogance). He also says, "*Nukr* means 'cleverness' and 'a difficult matter which had been unknown before.'" In this verse, *nukr* takes the second meaning.

Majma' says, "*Nukr* means *munkar*, and means 'something terrible which no one had seen the like of before.'"

Here, *qaryah* ("town") means "its people"; it is used figuratively, like it is in the verse, *ask the town* (12:82).

Rebelled against the commandment of its Lord and its messengers: This indicates that they denied God through associating partners with Him and also denied His messengers through belying their call.

Moreover, they rejected God through abandoning His ordinances and rejected His messengers and their authority (*wilāyah*), which they ordered them to follow, as is mentioned in verses such as: *And obey God and obey the Messenger, and if you turn away, then it is only upon Our messenger to present a clear message* (64:12).

They were taken to account severely and vengefully. Here, "accounting" is speaking of them being taken to account in this world, not the hereafter. Evidence that their accounting occurred in this world can be found in the following verses: *And whatever afflicts you is due to what your own hands have wrought, but God pardons much* (42:30); *And were the people of the town to believe and fear God, We would have opened for them the blessings of the heavens and earth; however, they disbelieved and were overtaken for what they used to do* (7:96).

Whenever an affliction befalls someone—that is to say, something which

is, in the view of religion, considered an affliction—it is a result of their actions, although God pardons much, indulgently and clemently, while accounting. However, God takes those who are insolent and arrogant towards His command and His Messengers to severe account through opposition, vengeance, and censure, and punishes them in unheard-of ways.

It means: How peoples who were rebellious and arrogant towards Our command and Our messengers—who did not obey God or His Messengers—did We take to account severely, through opposition and vengeance! We punished them harshly, with no limit; We eradicated them from the world.

Some say that "accounting" here refers to being taken to account in the hereafter, and the verse uses a past tense verb to indicate that it doubtlessly will have happened. However, this is incorrect.

So We called it to account severely and We chastised it: The verse shifts from the third person to the first person to indicate the enormity of the situation.

فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ أَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا ﴿٩﴾

(65:9) So it tasted the evil result of its conduct (*amrahā*), and the end of its affair was perdition.

Amr (translated as "conduct") refers to their rebellion and arrogance. It means: We afflicted them with the consequence of their insolence, and the consequence of their insolence was loss. It is as if they bartered obedience for haughtiness, and, in the end, they received perdition.

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَدْ أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا ﴿١٠﴾

(65:10) God has prepared for them severe chastisement, therefore be careful of (your duty to) God, O men of understanding who believe! God has indeed revealed to you a reminder.

This speaks of their recompense in the hereafter, just as the previous verses (*so We called it to account severely and We chastised it* (*with*) *a stern chastisement*, *so it tasted the evil result of its conduct*, 65:8-9) spoke of their recompense in this world.

The sentence *God has prepared for them...* begins without a linking conjunction, such as "and," because it acts as a response to an implied question in the previous verse. That is, upon encountering the previous verse, one might ask, "What did it mean for them to receive perdition?" The response would then be, "God has prepared for them severe chastisement."

Therefore be careful of (***your duty to***) ***God, O men of understanding who***

believe! God has indeed revealed to you a reminder: This concludes the previous discussion. The faithful are advised to be careful and guard themselves against being insolent towards the command of their Lord or rebelling against His obedience. Otherwise, they will be afflicted for their insolence and consequently receive perdition, just like the destroyed peoples were.

The faithful are described as 'men of understanding' (*ulū al-albāb*). God says *O men of understanding who believe*, since their intellects assist them in attaining the piety (*taqwā*) He desires from them. When they hear of the people who rebelled against the command of their Lord, were taken to account severely, and punished with an unheard-of punishment, and whose end was perdition—and then they heard that this had been repeated time after time—their intellects emptied themselves of insolence or arrogance towards the command of God in the face of God's severe accounting. Thus, their intellects remind them of and induce them towards piety. God revealed to them this reminder to inform them of what is for and against them to guide them to the truth and the straight path.

رَّسُولا يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَمَن يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا قَدْ أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ لَهُ رِزْقًا ﴿١١﴾

(65:11) A Messenger who recites to you the clear communications of God so that he may bring forth those who believe and do good deeds from darkness into light; and whoever believes in God and does good deeds, He will cause him to enter gardens beneath which rivers now, to abide therein forever, God has indeed given him a goodly sustenance.

"A Messenger" is either a new noun restating the previous noun (*ʿaṭf bayān*), or else it is a phrase which substitutes for the previous phrase (*badal*). (In either case, the previous noun was *dhikran*.) Therefore, *dhikr* ("reminder") is understood to mean "Messenger." He is called this because he is a medium through which people are reminded of God and His signs, and He is the path of calling towards the true religion. The context ("*who recites to you the clear communications of God...*") clearly indicates that "Messenger" means Muḥammad.

Similarly, "sending the Messenger"[1] means appointing him from the world of the unseen and making it clear to the people that He was a messenger from

1 Translator's note: This is a discussion of the expression *anzala Allāhu ʿalaykum dhikran*, in 65:10. *Anzala* can be understood to mean "sent down" although, here, it has been translated as "revealed."

Him, whereas, before that, people had not recognized him as such. This is similar to how God says: *And We sent down iron...* (57:25).[1]

However, some exegetes take this to mean "sending from heaven." For instance, the author of *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf* says that this refers to Gabriel when he recited verses to the Prophet, since he was followed by his people and was the means to convey them to them. However, the *prima facie* meaning of *who recites to you the clear communications of God...* is otherwise.

Possibly, "Messenger" could be the object of an elided verb, meaning, "We sent a messenger reciting the signs of God to you." Here, *dhikr* would refer to the sending down of the Qur'an or its contents, such as its rulings and wisdom.

So that he may bring forth those who believe and do good deeds from darkness into light: This has already been explained previously with respect to similar verses.

And whoever believes in God and does good deeds, He will cause him to enter gardens beneath which rivers now, to abide therein forever: This is a beautiful, joyous promise.

God has indeed given him a goodly sustenance: The verb *aḥsana* (meaning "to do good to someone") is used here to show the type of sustenance that God grants these people. *Sustenance* here refers to faith and righteous deeds in the world, and to the garden in the hereafter. Some exegetes just say that it refers to the garden.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ يَتَنَزَّلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿١٢﴾

(65:12) God is He Who created seven heavens, and of the earth the like of them; the decree continues to descend among them, that you may know that God has power over all things and that God indeed encompasses all things in (His) knowledge.

This pronouncement emphasizes the previous verses, namely: God's lordship, the appointment of the Messenger, the sending down of the reminder so that they would obey regarding those things, the painful chastisement and severe punishment for those who rebelled against and opposed Him, and the eternal gardens for those who obey Him, since God is powerful and omniscient.

The phrase, *God is He who created seven heavens* has been previously discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah Ḥā Mīm Sajdah (Chapter 41).

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1 Translator's note: That is, rather than sending iron down from the heavens, God made people aware of iron. Similarly, rather than sending the Messenger down from the heavens, God made people aware of him.

In the phrase, *And of the earth like them* apparently, *like them* means "of like number." This implies that God created seven earths, just as He created seven heavens. There are various interpretations: whether these seven earths are seven spheres like our earth, whether our earth consists of seven concentric layers, and we just live on the uppermost one, or whether it refers to the seven climatic zones of the inhabited globe. There are several viewpoints on each of these interpretations, and for another potential explanation one may refer to what was previously discussed in Surah Ham-as-Sajdah (Ch. 41).

Possibly, one could say that *and of the earth like them* means that God created a thing from the earth which is like the seven heavens, and that is the human being, who is compounded of earthly matter and a heavenly soul which is modelled after the higher spiritual realms.

The decree continues to descend among them seemingly refers to both the heavens and the earth. "The decree" (*amr*) is the divine command, as described in *His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, 'Be,' and it is* (36:83). This word of creation descends from its source through each heaven until it reaches the earthly realm, manifesting whatever is intended by the command, be it creation, effect, sustenance, death, life, honor, or humiliation, as indicated in *And He revealed His command in each of the heavens* (41:2) and *He regulates the affair from the heaven to the earth; then shall it ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is a thousand years of what you count* (32:5).

Some say that *command* (amr) refers to the shariʿah rulings which are revealed via the angels from heaven to the Prophet while he is on the earth. However, this is a restricted meaning, but the expression is not restricted, and the final part of the verse—*that you may know that God has power over all things...*—does not fit with it.

The statement, *that God has power over all things and that God indeed encompasses all things in (His) knowledge* is one of the goals behind creating the *seven heavens and of the earth like them*, and sending down the divine command through them. That is, since the creation and command are ascribed to God alone, a person who contemplates on this would have no doubt in God's power over or knowledge of all things. Therefore, the faithful men of intellect would fear opposing His command, since the custom of this powerful and omniscient God has been to reward those who obey His command and to punish the rebellious and haughty. Similarly, your Lord took these wrongdoing peoples to account and punished them severely.[1]

1 Translator's note: Possibly, the extent to which ʿAllāmah dwells on the severity of punishment experienced by those who rebel against God is reflective of his times, in that the ruling powers of his country and some other nearby countries at his

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, regarding *and how many a town...* (65:8), it says: (This means) the people of the town.

(2) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is related from Imām al-Riḍā, during a discussion with al-Ma'mūn:[1]
The "reminder" (*dhikr*) is the Messenger of God, and we are his family (*ahl*). This is made clear in the Book of God where it says in Sūrah al-Ṭalāq: *Therefore be careful of* (*your duty to*) *God, O men of understanding who believe! God has indeed revealed to you a reminder, a Messenger who recites to you the clear communications of God* (65:10-11). Therefore, the "reminder" is the Messenger of God, and we are his family.

(3) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is related from Abū al-Ḥasan (Imām) al-Riḍā:[2]
I (Al-Ḥusayn ibn Khālid) said to him, "Tell me about the verse, *by the heavens, full of ways* (*wa al-samā'i dhāt il-ḥubuk*, 51:7)."
He said, "They are woven to the earth," interlacing his fingers.
I said, "How are they woven to earth when God says *He raised the heavens without any pillar that you see*? (13:2)"
He said, "Exalted be God! Does God not say, *without any pillar <u>that you see</u>*?"
I said, "Yes."
He said, "So there is a pillar, but you do not see it."
I said, "May God make me your ransom, how is that done?"
He opened his left hand, then placed his right hand atop it, and said, "This is this world's 'earth', with its firmament (the first heaven) topping it like a dome. Then, above this world's firmament (the first heaven) lies the 'second earth', with the second heaven topping it like a dome. The, above the second heaven, lies the 'third earth', with the third heaven topping it like a dome. Then, above the third heaven, lies the 'fourth earth', with the fourth heaven topping it like a dome. Then, above the fourth heaven, lies the 'fifth earth', with the fifth

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time were engaging in a programme of enforced secularization and de-Islamization. Therefore, it can be taken not only as a general sentiment but also as a tacit criticism of the official policy of his time.

1 This is related from Ibn Bābawayh with a chain of narration from al-Rayyān ibn al-Ṣalt.

2 This is related from al-Qummī's father, from al-Ḥusayn ibn Khālid, from Abū al-Ḥasan (Imām) al-Riḍā.

heaven topping it like a dome. Then, above the fifth heaven, lies the 'sixth earth', with the sixth heaven topping it like a dome. Then, above the sixth heaven, lies the 'seventh earth', with the seventh heaven topping it like a dome. The throne of the Merciful, blessed and exalted, lies above the seventh heaven. This is what God says: *He Who created seven heavens, and of the earth the like of them; the decree continues to descend among them* (65:12).

"The owner of the command (*ṣāḥib al-amr*) is the Messenger of God, and the inheritor after the Messenger of God, standing on the face of the earth. The (divine) command descends to him from between the heavens and the earths above the firmament (of this world)."

I said, "So what lies beneath us other than the 'first earth'?"

He said, "There is nothing beneath us other than the 'first earth'. The six other ones are above us."

Author's comment: Something similar is related by al-Ṭabrisī from al-ʿAyyāshī from al-Ḥusayn ibn Khālid from Imām Riḍā.

This particular hadith is uncommon in its subject matter, and its content, especially the part about the descent of the divine command, lends itself more to an interpretation based on its underlying meaning rather than a literal interpretation, and God knows best.

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End of Chapter 65

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Chapter 66

Sūrah Al-Taḥrīm (The Prohibition)

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بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Introduction

This chapter begins by referring to what transpired between the Prophet and some of his wives in the story about forbidding (*taḥrīm*). It admonishes the Prophet for forbidding himself what God had allowed him in order to please some of his wives, thereby implying criticism of those wives and vindicating the Prophet, as the context of the verses indicates.

Then, it tells the faithful to guard themselves from divine punishment—the fire whose fuel is men and stones. They will only be recompensed for their deeds. None will be saved from it except the Prophet and those who believed along with him. Then it tells the Prophet to fight against those who reject faith (the *kuffār*) and the hypocrites.

The chapter concludes by presenting examples of faithless and faithful women. The context indicates that the chapter is doubtlessly Medinan.

Verses 1-9

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكَ تَبْتَغِي مَرْضَاتَ أَزْوَاجِكَ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١﴾

(66:1) O Prophet! Why do you forbid (yourself) that which God has made lawful for you; you seek to please your wives; and God is Forgiving, Merciful?

This address is tinged with censure of the Prophet for forbidding himself something which God had allowed him. However, it does not clarify what that thing was, apart from the fact that it was because *you seek to please your wives*. This signals that it was something allowable which the Prophet was doing, but which his wives did not like. Therefore, they gave him a hard time and irked him until he assuaged them by taking an oath to stop doing it and not to ever do it again.

O Prophet!: By addressing the Prophet as a "prophet" (*nabī*) rather than as a "messenger" (*rasūl*), it indicates that it is speaking to the Prophet about a personal matter pertaining to him directly, not anything relating to his mission

as a messenger.

Why do you forbid** (**yourself**) **that which God has made lawful for you: "Forbidding" here means making something unlawful through swearing an oath not to do it, as indicated by the second verse: *God indeed has sanctioned for you the expiation of your oaths* (65:2). The apparent meaning of the verse is that the Prophet took an oath not to do something, similar to the type of oath known as the *yamīn*,[1] which one must comply with: either one swears to do something, and must do it, or swears not to do something. Here, the Prophet swore not to do something which God had allowed him to do, thereby forbidding himself what God had allowed him through an oath.

"Forbidding" (*taḥrīm*) here does not mean that the Prophet legislated a lawful thing as unlawful for himself in a shari'ah sense; it would not be his place to do that.

You seek to please your wives: Meaning, you seek to please them through forbidding this. This clause is either an equivalent expression (*badal*) for *you forbid...* (*tuḥarrimu...*, 66:1) or a clause (*ḥāl*) describing its subject. It conveys that the censure is really directed at the wives—something emphasized by *If you both turn to God, then indeed your hearts are already inclined* (*to this*)... (66:4) along with *and God is Forgiving, Merciful* (66:1).

قَدْ فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢﴾

(66:2) God indeed has sanctioned for you the expiation of your oaths and God is your Protector, and He is the Knowing the Wise.

Al-Rāghib says:

> The expression *faraḍā Allāh 'alā* ("God has ordained upon") (in the Qur'an) denotes an obligation for all Muslims, including the Prophet. The expression *faraḍa Allāhu li-* ("God has ordained for") indicates that the Prophet may not disallow himself the act in question, as in *there is no harm in the Prophet doing that which Allah has ordained for him* (*faraḍa Allāhu lahu*, 33:38) and *God indeed has sanctioned for you the expiation of your oaths* (*faraḍa Allāhu lakum*, 66:2).

The word *taḥillah* ("dissolving (an oath)," "allowing") comes from the word *taḥallulah*. It takes the same form as *tadhkirah* and *takrīmah*; the verbal noun of this root is *taḥlīl* ("dissolving," "allowing").[2] Al-Rāghib explains: And His

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1 Translator's note: The *yamīn* or *qasam* is when someone swears an oath and thereby makes it obligatory on himself to fulfil it; otherwise, he must pay atonement (*kaffārah*).

2 Translator's note: That is, it is from the second form of the verb root *ḥ-l-l*, meaning

statement, *God indeed has sanctioned for you the expiation of your oaths* means He has clarified the means by which the binding of your oaths can be undone through expiation (*kaffārah*).

It means: God has decreed for you[1]—as if He has decreed a stroke of luck for them (the Muslims) when He did not forbid them from breaking oaths (*ʿuqdat al-yamīn*)—that you may nullify your oaths through atonement (*kaffārah*). God is your caring guardian (*walī*) who manages your affairs through legislation and guidance, since He is omniscient and wise.

The verse indicates that the Prophet had sworn not to do something, but that he has now been commanded to rescind that oath.

وَإِذْ أَسَرَّ النَّبِيُّ إِلَىٰ بَعْضِ أَزْوَاجِهِ حَدِيثًا فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَتْ بِهِ وَأَظْهَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَّفَ بَعْضَهُ وَأَعْرَضَ عَن بَعْضٍ فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَهَا بِهِ قَالَتْ مَنْ أَنبَأَكَ هَٰذَا قَالَ نَبَّأَنِيَ الْعَلِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿٣﴾

(66:3) And when the Prophet secretly communicated (asarra) a piece of information to one of his wives—but when she informed (others) of it (nabbaʾat bihi), and God made him to know it (aẓharahu Allāhu ʿalayhi), he made known (ʿarrafa baʿḍahu) part of it and avoided (aʿraḍa) part; so when he informed her of it, she said: Who informed you of this (hādhā)? He said: The Knowing, the one Aware, informed me.

Sirr means "a secret that one keeps to one's self." *Isrār* means "to confide a secret to someone else while urging them to keep it secret." The pronoun which is the subject of the verb *nabbaʾat* ("she informed") refers to *one of his wives* (*baʿḍ-i azwājihi*). The pronoun *-hi* in *bihi* ("of it") refers to what the Prophet told her secretly. The pronoun *-hu* in *aẓharahu* (*God made him to know it*) refers to the Prophet. The pronoun *-hi* in *ʿalayhi* refers to her telling the secret to someone else. The pronoun which is the subject of the verb *ʿarrafa* (*he made known*) and *aʿraḍa* ((*he*) *avoided*) refers to the Prophet. The pronoun *-hu* in *baʿḍahu* (*part of it*) refers to the conversation about the secret. The pronoun *hādhā* (*this*) refers to what she told someone else, when she spilled the secret.

The upshot of what happened is: The Prophet told a secret to one of his

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"to dissolve a substance," "to break an oath," and "to permit (make *ḥalāl*)," among other things.

1 Translator's note: Presumably, ʿAllāmah is alluding to al-Rāghib's explanation above, which treats the expression *faraḍā lakum* as allowing the Prophet to do things; or, more specifically, from disallowing him to forbid things from himself.

wives—namely, Ḥafṣah bint ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb—and urged her to keep it secret. However, she told it to someone else, against the Prophet's wishes. God informed the Prophet that she had told someone else the secret; he had told her about some of it but not all. When the Prophet told her about this, she asked him, "Who told you that I told the secret?" The Prophet said, "The One who is Knowing and Aware told me this; God knows what is secret and what is manifest, and is aware of all secrets."

إِن تَتُوبَا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا وَإِن تَظَاهَرَا عَلَيْهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ مَوْلاهُ وَجِبْرِيلُ وَصَالِحُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمَلائِكَةُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ ظَهِيرٌ ﴿٤﴾

(66:4) If you both turn to God, then indeed your hearts are already inclined (to this) (*ṣaghat qulūbukummā*); and if you back up each other against him, then surely God it is Who is his Guardian, and Gabriel and the righteous one among the faithful ones, and the angels after that are the aide.

This means: If you two repent to God, then you will have carried out the repentance that is incumbent upon both of you. However, if you unite against him, (know that) *God it is Who is his Guardian....*

Narrations concur that the two were ʿĀ'ishah and Ḥafṣah, two of the wives of the Messenger of God.

Ṣaghw means "to incline." Here, it means to incline towards falsehood, away from rectitude. When they vexed the Prophet and united against him, they committed a major sin,[1] since God says: *Surely* (*as for*) *those who vex Allah and His Messenger, God has cursed them in this world and the hereafter, and He has prepared for them a chastisement bringing disgrace* (33:57); *And there are some of them who vex the Prophet and say: He is one who believes every thing that he hears; say: A hearer of good for you* (*who*) *believes in Allah and believes the faithful and a mercy for those of you who believe; and* (*as for*) *those who molest the Messenger of Allah, they shall have a painful punishment.* (9:61)

'Hearts' in the phrase, *your two hearts* (qulūbukummā)[2] is in the plural but refers to their two hearts (not more than two hearts). This is a common grammatical construction.

And if you back up each other against him (taẓaharā)***, then surely God it is Who is his Guardian:*** *Taẓahur* means "to help each other." It (is a shorted

1 Translator's note: One of the *kabā'ir*; that is, an act which the Qur'an threatens to send people to hell for.

2 Translator's note: In the word *qulūbukummā*, "hearts" (*qulūb*) is in the plural, but "your two" is in the dual (*kummā*).

form of) the original word *tataẓāharā*. The pronoun 'Who' (*huwa*) in "*surely it is God Who is his Guardian* indicates that God—exalted be He—has a special care for the Prophet. He will assist him and directly look after his affairs, without any creature as an intermediary. A 'Guardian' (*mawlā*) is the one who looks after one's affairs and aids him against those who wish ill towards him.

'Gabriel' (*Jibrīl*) is appended to God, and 'the righteous among the believers' is appended in a manner like Gabriel. What is meant by 'the righteous among the believers,' as (some exegetes have) understood, are the virtuous ones from among the believers. Therefore, 'the righteous among the believers' is singular but is intended to refer to the collective, as in the saying: 'This righteous person among the people does not do this,' meaning the category as a whole. It is similar to saying: 'None who are righteous among them do it,' and akin to saying: 'I was among those conversing (using sing. pronoun *al-sāmir*) and among those present (using sing. pronoun *al-ḥāḍir*).'[1]

In this context, the way 'the righteous among the believers' is phrased differs from the phrase, 'the righteous one of the believers' and does not covey the same meaning. The former phrase could convey a sense of referring to the entire group (of righteous believers).[2]

Sunni narrations from the Prophet and Shi'i narrations from the Imams say that *the righteous one among the faithful* is 'Alī; we shall discuss them, God willing.

There are other views about this expression, but we have overlooked them here since they are unsupported.

And the angels after that are the aide **(ẓahīr)*:*** The singular form *aide* (ẓahīr) is employed to denote the angels' collective and unified support, standing together in a single rank. Their mention following the guardianship of Allah, Gabriel, and the righteous among the believers serves to emphasize their exalted status and the significance of their role.

The tone of these verses is unusual, since they inform the Prophet about

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1 Editor's note: In this passage, the author employs the linguistic feature of Arabic where singular nouns can represent a broader, collective concept. This is exemplified in the usage of 'the righteous among the believers.' While this phrase appears singular, it is intended to denote the entire group of virtuous believers, not just an individual. This concept is further illustrated with the examples 'the one conversing' (*al-sāmir*) and 'the one present' (*al-ḥāḍir*), both singular in form but implying a collective group involved in the act of conversing or being present.

2 Editor's note: This difference is due to the unique structure of Arabic where the relation of words to each other can change their apparent meaning. In Arabic grammar, the way words are connected (like 'of the' or 'among the') can make a significant difference in interpretation, even when the individual words are similar.

those who mistreated him and wished ill for him, and threaten those who united against him. However, the Prophet is addressed first and censured for forbidding himself something which God had allowed. It indicates that he should break his oath and promises to support him, even though this is done in the guise of censure.

Then it shifts person and addresses the faithful, saying: *And when the Prophet secretly communicated* (asarra) *a piece of information to one of his wives...* (66:3). This alludes to what had happened, although the details are omitted.[1] Already, even before alluding to the story, God had backed the Prophet; telling the story in an obfuscated manner is a further way in which God backs the Prophet.[2]

Then, it shifts person again. Previously, it had been addressing the faithful; now it addresses the two wives, declaring that their hearts had slipped due to their deed. Rather than commanding them to repent for their sin, it declares that they really stand before two choices: either they can both repent, or else (they should know that) the Prophet is supported by God—who is his guardian—Gabriel, the righteous among the faithful, and the angels after that. Then it expresses the hope that, should he divorce them, God would grant him better wives.

After that, it commands the Prophet to fight those who reject faith (the *kuffār*) and the hypocrites severely.

It concludes by presenting the examples of two faithless women and two faithful women.

In this chapter, God moves along the discussion after laying out their situation in *If you both turn to God, then indeed your hearts are already inclined* (*to this*)*; and if you back up each other against him*.... Then God demonstrates the situation of the faithful and the faithless: *O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families...* (66:6); *O you who disbelieve! Do not urge excuses...* (66:7); *O you who believe! Turn to God...* (66:8); *O Prophet! Strive hard...* (66:9); *God sets forth an example to those who disbelieve...* (66:10); *And God sets forth an example to those who believe...* (66:11)

عَسَىٰ رَبُّهُۥٓ إِن طَلَّقَكُنَّ أَن يُبْدِلَهُۥٓ أَزْوَٰجًا خَيْرًا مِّنكُنَّ مُسْلِمَٰتٍ مُّؤْمِنَٰتٍ قَٰنِتَٰتٍ
تَٰٓئِبَٰتٍ عَٰبِدَٰتٍ سَٰٓئِحَٰتٍ ثَيِّبَٰتٍ وَأَبْكَارًا ۝٥

(66:5) Maybe, his Lord, if he divorces you, will give him in your place

1 Translator's note: For instance, it does not mention the wives' names, or what the secret was about.

2 Translator's note: For instance, by protecting his privacy.

wives better than you, submissive, faithful, obedient, penitent, adorers, fasters[1], widows and virgins.

This signifies Divine self-sufficiency (that is, God is needless of them). Although the Prophet's wives may possess the distinction of being married to the Prophet, true nobility with God is attained through piety, as God has stated: '*Surely God has prepared for the doers of good among you* (minkunna, the wives of the Prophet) *a mighty reward*' (33:29). Pay attention to 'among you' (*minkunna*) in this context. Furthermore, He declares: '*O wives of the Prophet! Whoever of you commits an open indecency, the punishment shall be increased to her doubly; and this is easy to God. And whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Messenger and does good, We will give to her, her reward doubly, and We have prepared for her an honorable sustenance*' (33:30-31).

For that reason, after declaring that God is self-sufficient, it proceeds to present the pleasant possibility that, should the Prophet divorce them, they would be substituted by better wives. The predicate rests on the noble traits of these new wives that are mentioned: that is, they are Muslim, faithful, devoutly obedient, penitent, worshipful, fasting (*sā'iḥāt*), and either virgin or otherwise.

If the Prophet were to marry a woman with all those qualities, she would be better than them. Her superiority would really be due to two qualities—devout obedience (*qunūt*) and penitence. Or it could just be due to devout obedience, since the other qualities could be shared, but devout obedience is a precondition for obedience (to God), along with humility.

This understanding is supported by the example of Mary later in the chapter. She is described as "devoutly obedient"—*and she was of the obedient ones* (66:12). This devout obedience is what these two wives lacked, whereas obeying the Prophet is essential to obeying God, along with fearing to cross or vex the Prophet.

Therefore, from the foregoing, it is clear that the following exegetical view is invalid. That is, some exegetes hold that when this verse speaks of wives being "better," it means that his present wives are better than any previous wives that he had divorced, who would then no longer have had the immeasurable honor of having been married to him.

However, if the criterion in the verse for being "better" were just being married to the Prophet, as opposed to being divorced from him, then all of his wives would share that trait equally, and there would be no place for the noble qualities which the verse enumerates.

Tafsīr al-Kashshāf says:

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1 That is, those who fast. (Ed.)

Question: Why were all the qualities (for the wives) listed one after another, without any conjunctions, apart from "virgin and otherwise"?

Answer: Because these latter two qualities are antonyms; a single person cannot possess both at once, unlike the other qualities.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦﴾

(66:6) O you who believe! Save (*qū*) yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel (*waqūduhā*) is men and stones; over it are angels stern and strong, they do not disobey God in what He commands them, and do as they are commanded.

The verb *qū* is the imperative form of *wiqāyah* ("safeguarding") and means to protect something from distress or harm. *Waqūd* (with an *a* after the *w*) are the things that one uses to kindle a fire, such as wood or other things.

The *fire* is hell, and the people punished in it are its firewood. It means that the people themselves will be set alight, as in the verse: *Then in the fire they shall be burned* (40:52).

This and the next verse (*O you who disbelieve!...* , 66:7) lend support to the idea that deeds are embodied in the hereafter. *Stones* has been interpreted to mean "idols."

Over it are angels stern (ghilāẓ) ***and strong*** (shidād)***, they do not disobey God in what He commands them, and do as they are commanded:*** Stern, strong angels have been appointed to administer various types of punishment to the deserving.

Ghilāẓ is the plural of *ghalīẓ*, which is the antonym of "delicate" (*raqīq*). It most befits the situation to say that they are called *ghalīẓ* because they have a harsh job, similar to how the word *aghluẓ* is used in the verse: *strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and be hard against them* (aghluẓ ʿalayhim, 66:9). *Shidād* is the plural of *shadīd*, meaning "strong in resolve and deed."

They do not disobey God in what He commands them, and do as they are commanded: This seems to elaborate on *stern and strong*, meaning that they staunchly dole out the punishments that has God commanded and do not disobey Him or refuse. Rather, they do what they have been commanded to do unceasingly, without omissions or lapses due to weakness, for they are *stern and strong*.

From this, it is clear that *they do not disobey God in what He commands them* means that they strictly adhere to their responsibilities, and (*they*) *do as they are commanded* describes how exactingly they carry out their tasks. The two sentences do not mean the same thing, as some exegetes say.

About the end of the verse, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*[1] says:

> This indicates that, in the hereafter, angels will be charged with responsibilities (similar to how humans are in the world). They will be given divine commands and prohibitions, which they could violate.

However, the problem with this view is that this verse, and others, describe the angels as absolutely obedient, never disobeying God in any way whatsoever. This encompasses both the world and the hereafter. Therefore, nothing indicates that they will be charged with responsibilities in the hereafter.

Furthermore, the way the angels are charged with responsibility (*taklīf*) differs from humans. Among humans, being a *mukallif* (the one awarding responsibility, God) and *mukallaf* (the one made responsible, the human) is closely tied into divine reward and punishment, due to free will and the possibility of obeying or disobeying. However, the angels have an inherently pure essence, made of light. They only will what God wills, and only do what they are commanded. God says: *Nay! they are honored servants. They do not precede Him in speech and* (*only*) *according to His commandment do they act* (21:26-27). Therefore, they are not rewarded or punished for their deeds, since they are obligated to obey on a creational level, not a legislative level, in accordance with their varying degrees. God says: *There is no one who lacks an assigned place* (37:164) and *And we do not descend but by the command of your Lord; to Him belongs whatever is before us and whatever is behind us...* (19:64).

This verse addresses a general audience whereas the previous verses were specific, scolding the wives of the Prophet through revealing how they had wronged the Prophet and the ill effect of that. It urges the faithful, as a group, to discipline themselves and their families to guard themselves against the fire fuelled by those entering it, meaning that their misdeeds will cling to them and revisit them as a fire, tormenting them, with no saviour and no escape.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لا تَعْتَذِرُوا الْيَوْمَ إِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

(66:7) O you who disbelieve! Do not urge excuses today; you shall be rewarded only according to what you did.

This addresses the faithless as a group. After they have been recompensed by the fire, they shall proffer excuses for their faithlessness and disobedience. However, they shall be told that there are no excuses today, since it is the day of recompense on which each soul will receive what they had done, meaning that the punishment they are enduring is their misdeeds, the reality of which has now been laid bare to them. Since they have committed them, these deeds have

1 Translator's note: By Fakhr al-Rāzī (d. 1210).

stuck to them, and reality cannot be changed, nor can the decree of punishment be annulled. This is the apparent meaning of what they are told.

Some exegetes say that (they are told) *do not urge excuses today* after they enter the fire, since offering excuses is a form of repentance, and repentance cannot be accepted after someone enters the fire. However, they are but recompensed as their deeds require, in wisdom.

Given that this verse follows the previous verses, with their harsh warnings, it lends the sense that disobeying God and His messenger could be considered faithlessness (*kufr*).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَى رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَى بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٨﴾

(66:8) O you who believe! Turn to God a sincere turning (*tawbatan naṣūḥan*); maybe your Lord will remove from you your evil and cause you to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, on the day on which God will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him; their light shall run on before them and on their right hands; they shall say: Our Lord! make perfect for us our light, and grant us forgiveness, surely Thou hast power over all things.

Naṣḥ means "seeking a better deed or word which is wholesome for the doer or speaker." It also means "sincerity," such as in the expression *naṣaḥtu lahu al-wudd*, meaning to sincerely mean well and have goodwill towards someone; this is according to what al-Rāghib has said. A *sincere turning* (al-tawbah al-naṣūḥ) is a form of repentance which turns the doer away from the misdeed permanently, saving them from ever returning to it; therefore, they never do it again.

It first commands the faithful to guard themselves and their families against the fire and then enjoins them to repentance. As a consequence, they may have hope that God will cover their misdeeds and bring them into *gardens beneath which rivers flow*.

On the day on which God will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him: Al-Rāghib says in brief:

> The verb *khizy* can be used intransitively ("he was abased," "he felt ashamed") or transitively ("he humbled someone else," "he vanquished someone else"). It is similar to the verb *ʿalima*, *yaʿlamu* and connotes degradation. When used for one's self, it refers to intense shame; the verbal noun for this is *khazāyah*. When it is used for someone else, it

means to humiliate that person; the verbal noun for this is *khizy*. The verbal noun *ikhzā'* is used for both *khizāyah* and *khizy*.

Something similar can be said about the words *dhull* and *hawn*. *Hawn* is used for an inner feeling. *Hawn* and *dhull*, when applied to one's self, can be praiseworthy (such as inner humility). *Hūn* ("disgrace," "abasement") is done to someone else, and when *hūn* and *dhull* are done to someone else, it carries a negative connotation.

The day is an adverb describing what came previously. It means: Repent to God; possibly He shall cover your misdeeds and bring you into a garden on the day when none shall be humiliated and God shall not dishonor the Prophet through depriving them of generosity nor break the beauteous promise which He has promised.

The Prophet and those who believe with him: The expression *with* here refers to those who had faith in this world and who, therefore, necessarily, adhered to and obeyed the Prophet, never disobeying or antagonizing him.

Alternatively, it is possible that *those who believe* is the subject of the sentence, and *with him* is the predicate, while *their light shall run on* is a second predicate and *they shall say...* is a third predicate. In this case, it would mean that they never separate from the Prophet, neither in this world nor during the resurrection. This is a good view. A corollary of this interpretation is that the Prophet, specifically, is the one who would never be disgraced, and those whose light runs ahead and who ask for it to be perfected are, specifically, those who believed with him. This view is supported by a verse in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, which shall be presented soon.

Possibly, also, *with* is connected to *those who believe*, and *their light shall run on* is the first predicate, while the second predicate is the relative pronoun.

Their light shall run on before them and on their right hands: Similar ideas have been discussed before, such as regarding *the day you see the faithful men and women, their light running before them, and on their right hands* (Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, 57:12). It is not unlikely that the light running before them is the light of faith and the light on their right hands is the light of their deeds.

They shall say: Our Lord! make perfect for us our light, and grant us forgiveness, surely Thou hast power over all things: From the context, it can be understood that the forgiveness they are seeking perfects their light, or else that this is a precondition for perfecting their light. Therefore, there are some gaps in their light, which is the light of faith and the light of their deeds. This light has gaps in reverse proportion to their degrees of faith, as well as in proportion to their misdeeds which have left some spots empty in the their books of deeds which should have recorded their acts of servitude (towards God). Therefore,

they beseech their Lord to perfect their light for them and forgive them. This is alluded to in the verse: *And* (*as for*) *those who believe in God and His messengers, these it is that are the truthful and the faithful ones in the sight of their Lord: they shall have their reward and their light...* (57:19).

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٩﴾

(66:9) O Prophet! Strive hard against (*jāhid*) the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and be hard against them; and their abode is hell; and evil is the resort.

Jihād means to put forth effort to reform a matter and to defend against harm. When used here with respect to the unbelievers, it means to proclaim the truth: if they believe, (then they believe), and if not, then fight. When used with respect to the hypocrites, it means to try to appease them,[1] until their hearts settle on faith. If that does not happen, the Prophet never warred against hypocrites.

Some exegetes say that *and be hard against them* (ashdud ʿalayhim) mean to uphold the laws of punishment (*ḥudūd*) because, in that time, these punishments were mostly applied to the hypocrites.

However, you can see that this latter view is unsuitable.

Examining narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is related via a chain of narration from Ibn Sayyār from Imām al-Ṣādiq regarding *O Prophet! Why do you forbid* (*yourself*) *that which God has made lawful for you; you seek to please your wives* (66:1):

ʿĀ'ishah and Ḥafṣah found the Prophet with Māriyah. (After they objected,) the Prophet said, "By God, I will not be intimate with her (again)," so God commanded him to make expiation for his oath.

(2) In *Al-Kāfī*, via a chain of narration from Zūrārah:

I asked Imām al-Bāqir about a man who tells his wife, "You are forbidden to me."

He said, "If I were in charge,[2] I would have clapped him on the head and told him, 'God has permitted her to you, so how is it your place to make her unlawful to you? He has lied greatly, through swearing that what God has prohibited him is forbidden. This neither triggers

1 Translator's note: *Ta'līf qulūbuhum*, which could include giving them gifts.

2 Translator's note: For instance, as a formally appointed religious judge which they came to for arbitration.

divorce nor requires expiation (*kaffārah*).'"

I said, "What about the verse *O Prophet! Why do you forbid* (*yourself*) *that which God has made lawful for you* (66:1)—didn't God instruct the Prophet to pay expiation (*kaffārah*)?"

He said, "He forbade his slave-girl, Māriyah the Copt, to himself, and swore he would not be intimate with her. God required the Prophet to pay expiation for swearing the oath, not for forbidding her from him."

(3) *In Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related that Ibn ʿAbbās said:[1]

When he was with (his wife) Sawdah, the Prophet used to drink a beverage made of honey.

When he went to ʿĀ'ishah, she said, "There is a smell coming from you."

Then, when he went to Ḥafṣah, she said, "There is a smell coming from you."

He said, "This must be due to the beverage I drank at Sawdah's. By God, I will never drink it again."

Then God revealed *O Prophet! Why do you forbid* (*yourself*) *that which God has made lawful for you...* (66:1).

Author's comment: This hadith is narrated through various chains and in different wordings. However, it does not fit with this verse, which discusses a single event.

(4) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related that Ibn ʿAbbās said:[2]

ʿĀ'ishah and Ḥafṣah were fast friends. When Ḥafṣah went to her father's house to speak to him, the Prophet sent for his slave-girl, who stayed with him in Ḥafṣah's house. That was on ʿĀ'ishah's day. When she found the two of them in her house, she waited for her to leave, enflamed with jealousy. After the Prophet sent his slave-girl away, Ḥafṣah entered and said, "I saw who was with you. By God, you have wronged me."

The Prophet said, "By God, I will make you happy and will tell you a secret, if you promise to keep it."

She said, "What?"

He said, "I take you as my witness and swear that my slave-girl is now forbidden to me. (I am swearing this) in order to please you."

So Ḥafṣah went to ʿĀ'ishah and confided in her that she should rejoice, since the Prophet had forbidden his girl to himself.

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1 This is related from Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarānī, and Ibn Mardawayh through an authentic chain of narration from Ibn ʿAbbās.

2 This is related from Ibn Saʿd and Ibn Mardawayh, who relate it from Ibn ʿAbbās.

After she told the Prophet's secret, God revealed to him: *O Prophet! Why do you forbid* (*yourself*) *that which God has made lawful for you* (66:1).

Author's comment: There is somewhat of a mismatch between this account and the verses, especially the part which says *he made known part of it and avoided part*.

(5) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Ṭabarānī and Ibn Mardawayh relate that Ibn ʿAbbās said about *And when the Prophet secretly communicated a piece of information to one of his wives* (66:3):

Ḥafṣah entered her house while the Prophet was there, lying with Māriyah. The Messenger of God told her, "Do not tell ʿĀ'ishah about this and I will give you some good news: your father will hold command after Abū Bakr after I die."

Ḥafṣah went and told ʿĀ'ishah. ʿĀ'ishah said to the Prophet, "*Who informed you of this* (66:3)?"

The Prophet told her, "*The Knowing, the one Aware, informed me* (66:3)."

ʿĀ'ishah said, "I will not look at you until you forbid Mariyah to yourself," so the Prophet forbade her to himself, and God revealed, "*O Prophet! Why do you forbid* (*yourself*)... (66:1)?"

Author's comment: There are many narrations on this topic, but they differ from each other. Many of them say that the Prophet forbade Māriyah from himself because of what Ḥafṣah said, not because of what ʿĀ'ishah said, and that the one who said to the Prophet "*Who informed you of this* (66:3)?" was Ḥafṣah—meaning, "Who told you that I spilled your secret?"—not ʿĀ'ishah.

Nevertheless, *he made known part of it and avoided part* (66:3) is still unclear.

True, Ibn Mardawayh narrates that ʿAlī said, "No honorable person would ever investigate because God says *he made known part of it and avoided part* (663)." It is also related from Abū Ḥātim from Mujāhid and Ibn Mardawayh from Ibn ʿAbbās: "What was made known was what happened with Māriyah, and what was kept secret was what he said: 'Your father and her father shall lead the people after me.' This was kept secret out of fear that it would be spread."

However, there is a problem with this—it would not be respectful towards the Prophet for people to know what he said about swearing off Māriyah (a private matter) but to be kept in the dark about what he told her about the next two leaders (a public matter). Rather, it should have been the reverse.

Some narrate the reason for the revelation of this verse via a chain of narration from ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, but do not mention this. In the compilations of

hadith, like al-Bukhārī, Muslim, or al-Tirmidhī, it is related that Ibn ʿAbbās said:

> I kept wanting to ask ʿUmar about the two wives of the Prophet whom God mentions in: If you both turn to God, then indeed your hearts are already inclined (to this) (66:4). Finally, ʿUmar and I were performing hajj together. While we were on the way, ʿUmar took a detour off the path, so I took my waterskin and went after him. After he had answered the call of nature and came back to me, I poured water over his hands, and he washed (or performed wuḍū'). Then I said, "O Commander of the Faithful, who were the two wives of the Prophet mentioned in If you both turn to God, then indeed your hearts are already inclined (to this) (66:4)?"
>
> He said, "How strange, Ibn ʿAbbās (that you should ask this)! They were ʿĀ'ishah and Ḥafṣah." Then he began recounting to me what had happened.
>
> (ʿUmar said:) "We Quraysh used to have the upper hand over our women. When we came to Medina, we found a people ruled by their women. Then our women began to learn from their women.
>
> "One day, I got angry at my wife for talking back to me, and I didn't like her doing that. She said, 'Why don't you like that? By God, the wives of the Prophet used to speak their mind to him, and sometimes one of them would stay away from him for the whole day until nighttime.'
>
> "I said, 'Whichever one of them did that is ruined!'"
>
> "He (ʿUmar) said, "My house was in the highlands (of Medina; the ʿAwālī area). I had a neighbor who was one of the Helpers (*anṣār*). We used to take turns going down to the Messenger of God. One day, he would go and bring me news of the revelation and other things. Another day, I would do the same.
>
> "We used to say that the Ghassān tribe was shoeing their horses in preparation for battle. Then, one day, someone rapped on the door. I went out, and he said, 'Something serious has happened.'
>
> "I said, 'Have the Ghassān come?'
>
> "He said, 'More serious than that. The Messenger of God has divorced his wives.'
>
> "I told myself, 'Ḥafṣah has lost out; Ḥafṣah is ruined!' I used to think that that might happen.
>
> "After we prayed the morning prayer, I got dressed and went to Ḥafṣah's. She was crying. I said, 'Has the Mesenger of God divorced you all?'
>
> "She said, 'I don't know. He has been keeping to himself upstairs (or

outdoors, in his *mashrubah*).'[1]

"I fetched a young black servant, then told him, 'Ask (the Prophet) for permission for 'Umar (to come in).'

"He went in, then came out, and said, 'I told him that you are here, but he did not say anything.'

"So I went to the mosque. A group of people had gathered around the mosque and were crying. I sat with them. However, I couldn't handle it, so I went back to the servant and told him, 'Ask permission (from the Prophet) for 'Umar (to come see him).'

"He went in, then came out, and said, 'I told him that you are here, but he did not say anything.'

"I turned to leave, when he called me. 'Come in! He has granted you permission.'

"So I entered. The Prophet was resting on a straw mat, which had left marks on his side. I said, 'O Messenger of God! Have you divorced your wives?'

"He said, 'No.'

"I said, 'God is the greatest! O Messenger of God! Had you but seen us Quraysh, we used to have the upper hand over our women. But when we came to Medina, we found a people ruled by their women, and our women learned from their women. One day, I got angry at my wife because she talked back to me, and I disliked that. She asked, 'Why are you upset? By God, the wives of the Prophet speak their minds to him, and he stays away from them all day until the nighttime.' I told her, 'Whichever of them has done this has lost out.' Then I went to Ḥafṣah and asked, 'Did one of you talk back to the Messenger of God, and stay away from him all day until nighttime?' She said, 'Yes.' I said, 'Whichever one of you has done that has lost out and is ruined! Can any of you be sure that God will not be angry with you because you have angered the Messenger of God? If that happens, you are doomed!'

"The Messenger of God smiled.

"I told Ḥafṣah, 'Do not talk back to the Messenger of God, and do not ask him for anything. Ask me for whatever comes to your mind. Do not be fooled; your sister-wife is more beautiful and more beloved to the Messenger of God than you.' (That is, she can get away with this, but you can't.)

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1 Translator's note: *Mashrubah* has been interpreted to mean either (a) an upper room, like an attic, or (b) a garden in the household belonging to Māriyah.

"He smiled again.
"I said, 'O Messenger of God, can I make myself comfortable?'
"He said, 'Yes.'
"I raised my head and saw there was nothing in the house but three hides. I said, 'O Messenger of God, beseech God to bestow prosperity upon your community, as He did to the Persians and Romans, who do not even worship God.'
"He sat up and said, 'Are you in doubt, O Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb? They are a people whose delicacies rushed to them in this world (instead of remaining for them in the hereafter).' He had sworn to stay away from his wives for a month. So God admonished him about that and had him pay expiation for his oath."

Author's comment: The same idea is related in detail and in brief, through various chains of narration. As you see, the narration does not say which of his wives the Prophet confided in, or what was spoken of and what was kept back. This is of importance.

Additionally, this narration says that the Prophet swore off all of his wives. However, that does not match the verse. Additionally, God follows *Why do you forbid* (*yourself*) *that which God has made lawful for you; you seek to please your wives* (66:1) with *If you both turn to God, then indeed your hearts are already inclined* (*to this*)*; and if you back up each other against him...* (66:4) However, this narration does not say which two are referred to or what they had to repent for.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is related through a chain of narration from Abū Baṣīr that Imām al-Bāqir said:
If you both turn to God, then indeed your hearts are already inclined (*to this*)*; and if you back up each other against him, then surely God it is Who is his Guardian, and Gabriel and the righteous one among the faithful ones* (66:4): The *righteous one among the faithful* (ṣāliḥ al-mu'minīn) is ʿAlī.

(7) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Mardawayh from Asmā' bint ʿUmays:
I heard the Messenger of God say, "*The righteous one among the faithful* (ṣāliḥ al-mu'minīn) is ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib."

Author's comment: After presenting the previous narration from Abū Baṣīr, the author of (*Tafsīr*) *al-Burhān* says that Muḥammad ibn ʿAbbās has mentioned fifty-two narrations with a similar meaning, through both Sunni and Shiʿi chains of narration. Then he presents a selection of them.

(8) In *Al-Kāfī*, via a chain of narration from ʿAbd al-Aʿlā, the retainer (*mawlā*) of Āl Sām, it is related that Imām al-Ṣādiq said:

When this verse was revealed—*O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a fire* (66:6)—one of the believers sat down, crying, and said, "I am unable to do anything for myself, and now I have to do something for my family."

The Messenger of God said, "It suffices if you command them to do what you yourself do, and forbid them from what you forbid yourself from."

(9) In *Al-Kāfī*, it is related via a chain of narration from Samāʿah from Abū Baṣīr regarding *save yourselves and your families from a fire* (66:6): I said, "How should I save them?"

He[1] said, "Command them to do what God has commanded, and forbid them from what God has forbidden. If they obey you, you will have saved them. And if they disobey you, you will have fulfilled your responsibility."

Author's comment: He related this via another chain of narration from Dharʿah from Abū Baṣīr from one of the Imams.

(10) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related that ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib said regarding the verse: *save yourselves and your families from a fire* (66:6):[2]

Teach yourselves and your family about what is good, and discipline them.

(11) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Mardawayh that Zayd ibn Aslam said:

The Messenger of God recited this verse: *save yourselves and your families from a fire* (66:6).

They said, "O Messenger of God! How do we save our families from the fire?"

He said, "Command them to do what God loves, and forbid them from doing what God hates."

(12) In *Al-Kāfī*, via a chain of narration from Abū al-Ṣabāḥ al-Kanānī, it says:

I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh about the verse: *O you who believe! Turn to God a sincere turning* (66:8).

He said, "The servant (of God) repents from his sin, then does not repeat it."

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1 Translator's note: The narration does not mention who said this, although it is implied that it is one of the Imams.

2 This is related from ʿAbd al-Razzāq, al-Fāryābī, Saʿīd ibn Manṣūr, ʿAbd ibn Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Ḥākim (who authenticated it), and al-Bayhaqī in al-Madkhal from ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

Muḥammad ibn al-Fuḍayl said, "'I asked Abū al-Ḥasan about it and he said, "He repents from his sin and does not return to it...."'"[1]

(13) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Mardawayh that Ibn ʿAbbās said:
Muʿādh ibn Jabal said, "O Messenger of God! What is *a sincere turning* (*al-tawbah al-naṣūḥ*, 66:8)?"
He said, "That the servant regrets his sin which he committed, apologises to God, and then does not do it again, just like milk does not return to the udder."

Author's comment: There are many Sunni and Shiʿi narrations with this meaning.

(14) In *Al-Kāfī*, it is related via a chain of narration that Ṣāliḥ ibn Sahl al-Hamdāni said:
Imām al-Ṣādiq said regarding *their light shall run on before them and on their right hands* (66:8): "On the Day of Resurrection, the leaders of the faithful shall run before the faithful and on their right until they bring them to the homes of the people of the garden."

(15) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is related regarding this verse via a narration from Abū al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqir:
Whoever has light on that day will be saved, and every believer has light.

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1 Translator's note: There is more related from Muḥammad ibn al-Fuḍayl, but it is not included in *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* here.

Verses 10-12

These verses contain two similes through which God conveys the situation of the faithful and the faithless. The faithless perish miserably due to their treachery towards God and His Messenger and their rejection of faith. Their ties to the prophets (such as kin ties) benefitted them not. The faithless gloriously rejoice due to their sincere faith in God and His Messenger, devotion, and obedience; their ties to the enemies of God harmed them not, for the criterion for prestige with God is God-consciousness (*taqwā*).

The first simile: This conveys the situation of two women who were married to prophets whom God describes as *righteous servants*. What an honor! Since these two women betrayed these two prophets, they were commanded to enter the fire alongside the rest of the hell-bound lot. Being married to these prophets did nothing for them. They perished among others who perished, without the least bit of distinction or honor.

The second simile: This conveys the situation of two women, one of whom was the wife of Pharaoh, who ardently rejected God and called the people to worship him, pronouncing, "I am your High Lord!" Since she believed in God with pure faith, God saved her and brought her to the garden. Being married to someone like Pharaoh caused her no harm. The second is Mary, the daughter of ʿImrān, the truthful (*ṣiddīqah*), the devout. God honored her and blew of His spirit into her.

Through these similes, God sends a severe message to those wives of the Prophet who betrayed him, told his secret, allied against him, and vexed him—especially since God uses the words 'faithlessness' (*kufr*) and 'treachery' (*khiyānah*) and speaks of entering the fire.

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلا لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأَةَ نُوحٍ وَامْرَأَةَ لُوطٍ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحَيْنِ فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيَا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَقِيلَ ادْخُلا النَّارَ مَعَ الدَّاخِلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

(66:10) God sets forth an example to those who disbelieve the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot: they were both under two of Our righteous servants, but they acted treacherously towards them (*khānatāhummā*) so they availed them naught against God, and it was said: Enter both the fire with those who enter.

Al-Rāghib says:

> *Khiyānah* and *nifāq* are synonyms, although *khiyānah* used to be used for breaking pacts and trusts, and *nifāq* used to be used for hypocrisy

in religion. Then, they began to be used interchangeably. *Khiyānah* is opposing the truth and someone's right; for instance, through secretly violating a pact. The antonym of *khiyānah* is *amānah* ("security," "trust," "loyalty"). The verb is used in the following manner: "I betrayed a person" and "I betrayed that person's trust."

To those who disbelieve: If this relates to the *example* (that is, *an example to those who disbelieve*), it means: God has set forth an example illustrating the situation of those who disbelieved, showing that their connection to righteous servants is of no benefit to them. If it relates to *sets forth* (in the sense of presenting), it means: God has presented an example of the wives of Noah and Lot and their eventual fate as an example for those who disbelieved, so they may take heed and understand that their connection with the righteous among His servants will not benefit them and that due to their betrayal of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), they are inevitably among the dwellers of the Fire.

The wife of Noah and the wife of Lot are objects of the verb *sets forth* (ḍaraba). *Under* (taḥt) *two of our righteous servants* means that they were married to them.

So they availed them naught against God: The first pronoun *they* (a dual pronoun) refers to the *two servants*, and the second refers to the two wives. It means that these two women did not benefit from being married to these two righteous servants (of God).

It was said, Enter both the fire with those who enter: Meaning, along with their kith and kin who enter it, as is implied in the following verses:

About the wife of Noah: *Until when Our command came and water came forth from the valley, We said: Carry in it two of all things, a pair, and your own family—except those against whom the word has already gone forth, and those who believe* (11:40)

About the wife of Lot: *So remove your followers in a part of the night—and let none of you turn back—except your wife, for surely whatsoever befalls them shall befall her* (11:81).

Alternatively, *with those who enter* could mean "along with the faithless."

The wording here lends the sense that these two women have no honor before God, and He does not care how they perish. This is conveyed through the use of the word *qīl* (it was said) and through saying that they will unconditionally enter the fire.

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَةَ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِندَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِن فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١١﴾

(66:11) And God sets forth an example to those who believe the wife of Pharaoh when she said: My Lord! Build for me a house with Thee

in the garden and deliver me from Pharaoh and his doing, and deliver me from the unjust people.

To those who believe is parallel to, *to those who disbelieve* (66:10).

When she said: My Lord! Build for me a house with Thee in the garden: God summarizes her lifelong desires, which she sought through worship, in her prayer. When faith has been perfected, the inward and the outward, and the heart and the tongue, agree. A person (of faith) says what he does and does what he says. When he says he wants something, his actions match that.

Since God is presenting her as an example, her special station in worship is expressed through her prayer, which symbolizes her lifelong worship. Her prayer contains her request that God build for her a house near Him in the garden, save her from the Pharaoh and his deeds, and save her from the wrongdoing people, for she had chosen nearness to her Lord above being Pharaoh's companion and sweetheart, even though she was the queen of Egypt. She opted for a house built for her by her Lord over Pharaoh's house, which had everything a heart could have desired. She disdained the ornaments of the life of this world—even though they subjected themselves to her—and clung to honor from and favor from her Lord. She believed in the unseen and upheld her faith until she died.

This is what happened beforehand, which led to God making her an example for those who believe and summarizing her situation. Throughout her life and her life's worship, she only sought and worked to uproot all that distracted her from her Lord. Her prayer—mentioned in this verse—means that she only resorted to her Lord, seeking nearness to Him and to settle in the abode of His honor.

The wife of Pharaoh: According to narrations, her name was Āsiyah.

My Lord! Build for me a house with Thee in the garden: These two things (*with Thee* and *garden*) are mentioned together, because the garden is the abode of nearness to God, close to the Lord of the Worlds, as God says in: *Nay, they are alive, sustained before their Lord* (3:169).

However, being present with her Lord, near Him, is an intangible (*maʿnawiyyah*) honor, whereas abiding in the garden is a tangible (*ṣūriyyah*) honor.[1] In her petition, she blends both of those honors.

And deliver me from Pharaoh and his doing: She exonerates herself,

1 Translator's note: That is, being close to God does not involve any physical matter or form; it is a matter of the spirit, soul, or heart. However, having a house in the garden involves a type of matter or form (of the type that is present in the afterlife, not the physical matter or forms of the physical world). Therefore, she is praying for a thing which has no form whatsoever, and a thing which has a form in the afterlife.

begging God to save her from Pharaoh and his deeds, which, as his companion, she necessarily shared in and could be considered guilty for. Some exegetes say that *doing* refers to the conjugal act.

And deliver me from the unjust people: Pharaoh's people. She exonerates herself again, through begging God to save her from the entire society, just as, in the previous clause, she had begged God to save her from a specific element of society (Pharaoh's household and court).

وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهِ وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقَانِتِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

(66:12) And Mary, the daughter of ʿImrān, who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her of Our inspiration and she accepted the truth of the words of her Lord and His books, and she was of the obedient ones.

This is appended to *the wife of Pharaoh* through the conjunction *and*. It means that God presents Mary as an example to the faithful.

God presents her as an example and praises her by name, whereas He has not mentioned the name of any other woman in His Book. He mentions her name in the Qur'an in thirty-odd places in twenty-odd chapters.

Who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her of Our inspiration: Here, as elsewhere in the Qur'an, He praises her for her chastity. Possibly, this is to dispel the Jews' accusations towards her, as God says in: *And for their having uttered against Mary a grievous calumny* (4:156) and, similarly, in *And she who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her* (21:91).

And she accepted the truth of the words of her Lord: Exegetes say that this means that she believed in what God revealed to His prophets. Some exegetes say that it means that she believed in heaven and hell, and God's commands and prohibitions. However, this view is incorrect, since it would necessarily include all the divine books (and therefore it would not be necessary to say both *words* and *books*).

And His books: This encompasses the divinely revealed laws, like the Torah and Gospel, and also the Qur'an. Possibly, what is meant by her "accepting the truth of the words of her Lord" is her being *ṣiddīqah* ("truthful"), as God says in: *The Messiah, son of Mary is but a messenger; messengers before him have indeed passed away; and his mother was a truthful woman* (5:75).

And she was of the obedient ones: That is, she was of those who obey God, humbly, loyally, although that was more common among men than women.

This interpretation is supported by the use of the word "devout" (*qunūt*) with this meaning in the verse where God tells of how the angels called to her:

O Mary! Keep to obedience (uqnutī) *to your Lord and humble yourself, and bow down with those who bow* (3:43). Some exegetes say that *the obedient ones* refers to her clan and tribe, who were a righteous line. However, this is unlikely, for the reasons already stated. Furthermore, since this example is being presented to the two wives of the Prophet (who vexed him), it is more appropriate for *the obedient ones* to refer to all those who are humble and obedient to God (not to a specific clan).

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is related from Sharaf al-Dīn al-Najafī, without a further chain of narration, that Imām al-Ṣādiq said regarding the verse: *God sets forth an example to those who disbelieve the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot* (66:10):
God presents an example for ʿĀ'ishah and Ḥafṣah who backed each other against the Messenger and told his secret.

(2) In *Majmaʿ* (*al-Bayān*), it is related from Abū Mūsā that the Prophet said:

(3) May men have reached perfection, but only four women: Āsiyah, the daughter of Muzāḥim, the wife of Pharaoh; Mary, the daughter of ʿImrān; Khadījah, the daughter of Khuwaylid; and Fāṭimah, the daughter of Muḥammad.

(4) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related that the Messenger of God said:[1]
The best of the women of paradise are Khadījah, the daughter of Khuwaylid; Fāṭimah, the daughter of Muḥammad; Mary, the daughter of ʿImrān; and Āsiyah, the daughter of Muẓāhim, the wife of Pharaoh. God tells of them (Āsiyah and Mary) in this verse (which demonstrates Āsiyah's merit): *My Lord! Build for me a house with Thee in the garden* (66:11).

(5) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Ṭabarānī relates from Saʿd ibn (Junādah) that the Messenger of God said:
God wedded Mary, the daughter of ʿImrān, to me in Paradise, along with the wife of Pharaoh and the sister of Moses.

Author's comment: According to narrations, the wife of Pharaoh was killed by her husband when he found out that she believed in God alone. However, narrations disagree about how he killed her. Some say that when he learned of her faith, he tried to force her to return to disbelief. However, she refused anything but faith, so he ordered that she be crushed to death beneath an enormous

1 It is related from Aḥmad, al-Ṭabarānī, and al-Ḥākim (who authenticated it) that Ibn ʿAbbās said that the Prophet said this.

rock, and this was done.

Others say that when they were about to torture her, she prayed—as God tells us—*My Lord! Build for me a house with Thee in the garden...* (66:11). God accepted her prayer and showed to her the house she would have in the garden. Then, her soul left her, and so, by the time they put the rock onto her, her soul had already left her body.

Others say that Pharaoh drove four pegs into her, lay her on her chest, placed a millstone on her chest, and faced her towards the sun.

And God knows best.

End of Chapter 66

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Chapter 67

Sūrah Al-Mulk (The Kingdom)

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the universality of God's lordship of the universe against the claim of the idol-worshippers. The idol-worshippers maintained that every section of the universe has a lord from the angels and others while God is merely the lord of lords.

That is why, (in this chapter), God enumerates many of His blessings in creation and in (its) organization and management, which He does in the spirit of arguing and remonstrating in favor of His lordship. He inaugurates His speech with the mention of His blessedness (*al-tabāruk*), which refers to the abundant manifestation and flow of blessings from Him. He (then) repeats His description (in this chapter) by means of the attribute of *al-raḥmān* (the most Merciful), which word is a hyperbolic form of *al-raḥmah* (mercy). *Al-raḥmah* means 'to grant in the face of the evocation of poverty'. This chapter (also) contains warnings, which (warnings) terminate with the mention of the day of the resurrection of mankind and their gathering (for reckoning and requital).

The contents of this chapter can be summarized as a call to the unity of (God's) lordship, and resurrection. This chapter is of Meccan provenance on the basis of the testimony of the contents of its verses.

Verses 1-14

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِى بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

(67:1) Blessed is He in Whose hand is the kingdom, and He has power over all things.

The blessedness of something (*tabāruk al-shay*) means an abundant emanation and issuance of goodness and blessings from it.

The statement ... *He in Whose hand is the kingdom...* includes, by means of its absoluteness, every kingdom. This is while the description of the kingdom being in His hand is a figure of speech to denote His total and complete dominion and control over it and Him being able to deal with it and treat it as

He wishes. This is similar to one who possesses something in his control. He deals with it and turns it as he wishes. Thus God owns, by Himself, everything, from all its perspectives, and He (also) owns what everything (else) owns.

Therefore, God's description here as ... *He in Whose hand is the kingdom...* is more expansive than His description as 'king' in ...*with a most Powerful King* (54:55), and it is more clear, explicit, and affirmative than His description in ...*to Him belongs the kingdom...* (64:1).

The concluding statement ...*and He has power over all things* means His power is unlimited and never ending, which feature is a necessary and essential quality of the absoluteness of the kingdom, in light of the context. This is even if the absoluteness of the kingdom, which is from the attributes of the (divine) act (*ṣifāt al-fi'l*), is from the requisites of the absoluteness of power, which is from the attributes of the (divine) essence (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*).

Nonetheless, this verse contains an indication of the proof of the possibility of what shall be mentioned subsequently (in this chapter) of the matter of resurrection.

الَّذِى خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ ۝٢

(67:2) Who created death and life that He may try you—which of you is best in deeds; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving,

Life is the state of a thing whereat it senses and intends, while death is the absence of these things. However, death, from what comes across from the teachings of the Qur'an, is the transition from one mode of the modes of life to another mode as was understood from the following verses *We have ordained death among you and We are not to be overcome, in order that We may bring in your place the likes of you and make you grow into what you know not* (56:60-61). Consequently, there is no problem in associating the act of creation to death as it is to life.

However, if death is taken in the meaning of absence as it is done in ordinary convention then it means the absence of the aptitude or faculty of life, and that has a share in existence. In such a case the association of creation to it is valid as it is to blindness from sight (where blindness is the absence of the aptitude or faculty of sight) and as it is to darkness from light (where darkness is the absence of the aptitude or faculty of light).

The statement, ...*that He may try you—which of you is best in deeds...* is the goal and purpose of God's creation of death and life, and test and tribulation. Thus the meaning is 'Your creation, in this manner, which is where you live and then die, is a creation that is brought forth and is test-based where the one from among you who is best in deeds, is distinguished by it from the others'. And it

is known that test and distinction are not save for something that is to come to you subsequent to them, which is recompense of all on the basis of their deeds.

In addition, this verse contains an allusion that the actual aim of creation is to convey the goodness of recompense, whence it mentions good deeds and the distinction of whoever brings forth the best of it. Thus good doers are the ones intended by creation while those other than them are intended for them.

This verse is brought to a close with *...and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving.* He is the Mighty (*al-ʿazīz*) since absolute kingdom and power belong to Him alone. Consequently, no vanquisher overcomes Him. And neither has He made anyone capable of opposing Him save in the spirit of test and examination, and He shall take them to task (for opposing Him). Further, He is the Forgiving (*al-ghafūr*), for He pardons many of their evil deeds in this world and shall forgive many more in the hereafter, as He has promised.

This verse is brought to a close by two (divine) names (which are 'the Mighty' and 'the Forgiving'). By that, the chapter both frightens and renders desirous (to the listeners) what the content of this chapter calls to.

Do know that the content of this verse is not simply a claim devoid of (incriminating) proof (which would render all excuses void), and that what was meant by it was simply an instruction such as may perhaps be imagined; rather this verse serves as an introduction which will soon be required (as the chapter progresses)—or it is a necessary introduction requiring the judgment in favor of the necessity of resurrection for the sake of recompense. This is because a person who is clad in this worldly life, which life is adjoined to death, is not devoid of achieving one of two qualities: either the quality of a good-doer or its contrary. This is while he is furnished, on the basis of his innate nature (*al-fiṭrah*), such that if it were not for the presentation of evil by an evil being, that furnishing (of his innate nature) would lead him to good deeds. Rarely is a human being devoid of acquiring one of these two qualities, (the exception being) such as children and those judged similar to them.

The quality obtainable and resulting from the existence of a thing, effective in the majority of its cases, is (considered) the goal and purpose of its life, and intended by its creation. Therefore, just as the plant life of a certain tree leads, in the majority of cases, to the production of fruits, which is considered the goal of its existence, and intended from it, so similarly, good deeds and virtuousness are goals of the creation of mankind. It is also known that virtuousness and good deeds, if demanded and desired, are demanded and desired for other than themselves, and not for themselves. The actual desired thing is the pure (paradisiacal) life uncontaminated with defects where futility and sin do not present themselves to it. Thus this verse is in the meaning of *Every soul must*

taste of death and We try you by evil and good by way of probation; and to Us you shall be brought back (21:35).

الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا ۖ مَا تَرَىٰ فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ مِنْ تَفَاوُتٍ ۖ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَىٰ مِنْ فُطُورٍ ﴿٣﴾

(67:3) Who created the seven heavens one above another; you see no incongruity in the creation of the Most Merciful; then look again, can you see any disorder?

It means: "(He created the seven heavens) congruous, in conformity, correspondent, identical (*muṭābaqah*), one (heaven) over the other, or one of them resembling the other," as it is held. Some of what we may say of this verse has already been mentioned previously in the commentary of Sūrah *Ḥā Mīm Sajdah* (Ch. 41).

Regarding ... *you see no incongruity (al-tafāwut) in the creation of the Most Merciful* Al-Rāghib writes: "the word *al-fawt* (which has the same root letters as the word *al-tafāwut*, which are *f-w-t*) means 'the distance of a thing from a person such that its attainment is difficult or unfeasible.'" He writes: "God says *And if anything* (*out of the dowries of your wives*) *has passed away from you* (fātakum) *to the unbelievers*.... (60:11). This is while the word *al-tafāwut* means 'the difference in characteristics or qualities as if the characteristic or quality of one of two things is lost to the other or the characteristic or quality of each one of two things is lost to the other" (hence them being different or incongruous). God says ... *you see no incongruity* (tafāwut) *in the creation of the Most Merciful* meaning that there isn't in it what deviates from the requirement of wisdom'.

Hence the meaning of the negation of incongruity (in creation) is the connectivity in the organization and management (of creation), and the connectivity of things with each other in terms of goals and benefits that result from the interaction of one with the other. This is while the (apparent) friction, discordance or conflict of different causes in creation is like the wrangling of the scale pans of a weighing scale and their conflict (with each other) in terms of heaviness and lightness and rising and declining. Nevertheless, the scale pans in fact differ with each other in order to aid the one in whose control the weighing scale lies in what he wants of finding out the weight of the commodities being weighed.

So God has arranged the different parts of creation in such a way that they bring about their aims and purposes without one of them causing the other to miss its goal or purpose, or without the necessary quality of one thing, which is necessary for it to obtain its required goal and purpose, being lost.

The expression ... *you see no...* is a general address made to whosoever is able to see, while attaching the word *khalq* (creation) to the word *al-raḥmān*

(the most Merciful) (*khalq al-raḥmān*) in this verse, in the form of a possessive construct (meaning: something *of* something) as follows ... *in the creation of the Most Merciful* indicates that the goal and aim of creation is generic mercy. This is while rendering the word *tafāwut* grammatically indefinite when it is in the context of negation, and the insertion of the word *al-raḥmān* to it, is in order to denote generality.

... then look again, can you see any disorder? The word *al-fuṭūr* that occurs in it means 'disorder, deficiency, imperfection (*al-ikhtilāl*), weakness, feebleness, and insignificance (*al-wahyu*)'. The meaning of 'looking again' is to look a second time, which is a figure of speech denoting scrupulousness and minuteness in sight, and assiduity in it.

ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ ﴿٤﴾

(67:4) Then turn back the eye again and again; your look shall come back to you dulled while it is fatigued.

The word *al-khāsi'* when applied to sight means 'sight that is constricted, depressed, dejected and rendered downcast due to humiliation and disgrace' as explained by al-Rāghib. He also said 'the word *al-ḥāsir* means "something that is exhausted, incapacitated, powerless, and fatigued due to the exhaustion of its strength and power." This can be imagined to occur in an active (*ḥāsir*) and passive sense (*maḥsūr*). As for the active sense, this can be imagined when a thing has itself exhausted its strength and power, thereby rendering itself tired. It can also be imagined in the passive sense which is when fatigue and weariness exhaust the thing. The speech of God here .... *your look shall come back to you dulled* (khāsi'an) *while it is fatigued* (ḥāsir) can validly be understood in both senses, active and passive.'

The word *karratayni* is a word in the dual form. Its singular is *karrah*. The latter means 'returning'. The dual form (*karratayni*) means 'excessiveness, increase and repetition'. Thus the meaning obtained is 'then return your gaze repeatedly, that is, many times. Your sight will (only) return to you diminished, depressed, disgraced, and constricted while its state will be such that it will be fatigued and exhausted, unable to find any imperfection or triviality'.

In these two verses, it is pointed out that the system in place in the universe is a united, singular system where its different parts are connected with and bound to each other.

وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ ۖ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيرِ ﴿٥﴾

(67:5) And certainly We have adorned the lower heaven with lamps

and We have made these missiles for the Shaitans, and We have prepared for them the chastisement of burning.

The word *al-maṣābīḥ* is the plural of *al-miṣbāḥ*. It means a lamp. Stars (*al-kawākib*) are called lamps due to their luminosity and brightness. An explanation about that has been made in the commentary of Sūrah *Ḥā Mīm Sajdah*.

The statement *...and We have made these missiles for the Shaitans...* means that We have made the stars (*al-kawākib*), with which We have adorned the sky, missiles (*rujūm*). Whosoever from the satans eavesdrops in order to hear, is consequently pelted with them, as God says *But he who steals a hearing, so there follows him a visible flame* (15:18). And *Except him who snatches off but once, then there follows him a brightly shining flame* (37:10).

It is said that this verse is proof that what is meant by stars (*al-kawākib*), with which the sky is adorned, is the sum total of the original stars (*al-kawākib al-aṣliyyah*) and the shooting stars (*al-shuhub al-samāwiyyah*). This is because the original stars do not move from their location or abode. The words *al-kawākib* and *al-najm* are applied to shooting stars as they are applied to the original celestial bodies.

It is said that the shooting stars split from the (original) stars and serve as missiles for the satans. As for the (original) stars themselves, they do not move away except when God wishes their destruction. This perspective is most in line with contemporary scientific views. This is while some discussion regarding the meaning of 'shooting the satans by means of shooting stars' has already occurred previously.

The concluding statement *...and We have prepared for them the chastisement of burning* means: "We have prepared for the satans, and they are the wicked ones from the jinn, the punishment of the blazing fire."

وَلِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٦﴾

(67:6) And for those who disbelieve in their Lord is the punishment of hell, and evil is the resort.

When God has mentioned some signs of His lordship in (the previous verses of) this chapter, then in this verse, He follows them up with a threat (from Himself) for whoever disbelieves in His lordship. This is on the basis of the style of this chapter where it integrates proofs, threats, and warnings.

The ambit of the referents of 'those who disbelieve in His lordship' is wider than the polytheists who negate His (universal) lordship in favor of their deities, claiming that God is merely the Lord of lords. It is wider than those who reject His lordship absolutely, and more general than those who acknowledge and confirm His lordship but differentiate between Him and His messengers

such as the Jews and the Christians who believe in some messengers and deny others; (rather the reference is to all of them).

Nonetheless, this verse is connected to 67:2, which reads *Who created death and life that He may try you—which of you is best in deeds; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving* . This is due to what this verse contains of an indication for resurrection and recompense, connected to what is before it, like a generality after a specification.

إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا شَهِيقًا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ ﴿٧﴾

(67:7) When they shall be cast therein, they shall hear a loud moaning of it as it boils, almost bursting for fury.

Al-Rāghib defines the word *al-shahīq,* which occurs in this verse, as 'prolonged or lengthened *zafīr* where *al-zafīr* is the returning or sending back of the breath (into the chest) while/and *al-zafīr* is its prolongation' (and so therefore *al-shahīq* would mean prolonged or lengthened inhalation; lengthened drawing back or sending back of breath (into the chest)).' This is while the word *al-fawarān*, as it is defined in the Qurʾān commentary *Majma' al-bayān*, means 'an increase in boiling'. The word *al-tamayyuz* means 'breaking, bursting, fragmenting', and the word *al-ghayẓ* means 'heightened anger and rage'. Thus the meaning of this verse is: "when the disbelievers will be thrown into hell-fire, they shall hear from it a *shahīq* (prolonged inhalation), which means it shall draw them into its interior just as air is drawn into the chest by means of *shahīq* (prolonged inhalation), while it will be boiling and seething with them, and so it will raise them up and let them drop, nearly fragmenting and bursting due to heightened anger and rage!"

تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ۖ كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ ﴿٨﴾

(67:8) Whenever a group is cast into it, its keeper shall ask them: Did there not come to you a warner?

The word *al-fawj* that occurs in this verse, as defined by al-Rāghib, refers to 'a group passing by in a hurry, rushing ahead'. The part of this verse that says *Whenever a group is cast into it...* means that the disbelievers shall be cast into hell-fire in groups, which the following verse (also) indicates (in corroboration) *And those who disbelieve shall be driven to hell in companies...*(39:71). They shall be cast thus so that the followers may join the ones (they) followed in deviation, as the following verse says *...and put the impure, some of it upon the other, and pile it up together, then cast it into hell...* (8:37). Some clarification for this phenomenon has occurred in the context of the thirty seventh verse of Sūrah al-Anfāl.

The word *al-khazanah* that occurs in this verse is the plural of *al-khāzin*.

It refers to the custodian or keeper or guardian of something accumulated or stored and saved. Those meant by the plural *al-khazanah* are the angels in charge of hell-fire, who administer (different) types of its punishments. God says *O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones; over it are angels stern and strong* (66:6). And God says *I will cast him into hell...* (74:26) till it says *Over it are nineteen. And We have not made the wardens of the fire others than angels...* (74:30-31).

Hence, the meaning obtained is: "Every time a group from the groups of the disbelievers is thrown into hell-fire, being driven to it, the angels in charge of hell-fire, guarding it, shall ask them in censure 'did not a warner come to you?'" This being a reference to the warner-prophet.

قَالُوا بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ ﴿٩﴾

(67:9) They shall say: Yea! Indeed there came to us a warner, but we rejected (him) and said: Allah has not revealed anything, you are only in a great error.

This verse relates to the disbelievers' answer to the question posed to them by the keepers of hell-fire. Their answer (in this verse) serves as confirmation and confession (on their part) that a warner did come to them but that they belied him. The part of this verse that reads *...Allah has not revealed anything...* illustrates their denial, and similarly so for the end part of this verse, which says *... you are only in a great error.*

The suggestion is made that the end part of this verse *... you are only in a great error* is the speech of the angels with which they respond to the disbelievers after the latter had replied to their question with what they replied. However, this interpretation is contextually remote. Similarly contextually remote is the suggestion that it is the speech of those messengers whom the disbelievers had belied, which speech the angels were relating to the disbelievers (being cast into hell-fire).

وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿١٠﴾

(67:10) And they shall say: Had we but listened or pondered, we would not have been among the inmates of the burning fire.

The word 'to listen/to hear' (*al-samu'*) means the perception of sound or speech by means of the (relevant) bodily organ. And perhaps what is (actually) meant by it (that is, by the act of listening/hearing (*al-samu'*), which is the perception of sound or speech by the relevant bodily organ) is the aim and purpose

of it in the opinion of rational creatures. This is to abide by or to comply with what it (that is, the speech heard) necessitates or requires in terms of actualizing it (that is, its contents) or relinquishing the same.

This is while the word *al-aql* ('the intellect' or 'pondering' in the context of this verse) is applied to distinguishing the good from the bad, and the beneficial from the harmful. And perhaps what is (actually) meant by it (that is, by the intellect/pondering (*al-aql*), which is the distinction of good from bad and the beneficial from the harmful) is its aim and purpose, which is to abide by or to comply with what it necessitates of seeking good and the beneficial, and refraining from what is bad and harmful. God says ...*they have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear; they are as cattle, nay, they are in worse errors; these are the heedless ones* (7:179).

More often than not, it is the general public that benefits from (the faculty of) hearing/listening (*al-samu'*). This is due to their failure to intellectually apprehend the minuteness and depth of matters, understand their realities, and be guided to their benefits and evil. It is only the elite that benefit from the intellect (*al-aql*).

Therefore, the clause ...*Had we but listened or pondered*... has the meaning of 'listened' to be the (positive) response to the call of the messengers and to abide by or comply with what their speech entailed. This is because they (that is, the messengers) were trustworthy advisers and admonishers. And what is meant by 'pondered' is to abide by or comply with the demands of what they (that is, the messengers) called to, of the truth, with care and consideration and rational thought, in that it is true and it is obligatory that the human being submits to the truth.

This is while the reason 'listening' precedes 'pondering' (in this verse) is because the use of the former faculty is from the traits of the general public who are in the majority, while the use of the intellect is from the traits of the elite who are unique and few.

Hence, the meaning of this verse is: "had we, while in the world, but obeyed and heeded the messengers in what they advised and admonished or had we but pondered and given thought to the proof of the truth, we would not have been, today, from the inhabitants of the fire." Thus they would be the companions and fellows of hell-fire, staying therein forever.

It is suggested that the verse combines 'listening' and 'pondering' because the basis of moral responsibility rests on the evidences obtained from listening and pondering.

فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنْبِهِمْ فَسُحْقًا لِأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿١١﴾

(67:11) So they shall acknowledge their sin, but far will be (forgiveness) from the inmates of the burning fire.

The disbelievers had said *...Had we but listened or pondered, we would not have been among the inmates of the burning fire.* They said this in regret and remorse for what they had neglected of what was due on them from God's side, and they said this in regret and remorse for what they had caused themselves to miss of goodness. Thus (in this verse) they are (described as) admitting that what they had brought forth (of deeds) was such that its consequence was entrance into hell-fire while it was incumbent on them that they should not have brought forth such a thing. Thus this was the sin (*dhanb*), and they had acknowledged their sin.

This is while the word *dhanb* (sin) has been rendered singular in this verse (where the plural would have been *dhunūb*) on the basis that it is the meaning of the verbal noun (*al-maṣdar*)[1] that is meant from it (here), and it is (indeed) originally a verbal noun. The end part of this verse says *...but far will be* (*forgiveness*) *from the inmates of the burning fire.* The word *al-suḥq* means 'the crumbling or fragmentation of something', as defined by al-Rāghib, and it serves as an imprecation against them.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَيْبِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿١٢﴾

(67:12) (As for) those who fear their Lord unseen, they shall surely have forgiveness and a great reward.

When God has mentioned the state of the disbelievers and what they shall be requited with due to their disbelief (in the previous verse), He then in this verse contrasts that with the state of the believers in the unseen in order to complete the (bipartite) division. And He has mentioned 'fear' to be from their quality because the context is that of warning and threat.

Further, He has reckoned their fear to be a fear of the unseen because what they believed in is veiled from them beneath veils of the unseen.

وَأَسِرُّوا قَوْلَكُمْ أَوِ اجْهَرُوا بِهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٣﴾

(67:13) And conceal your word or manifest it; surely He is Cognizant of what is in the hearts.

This verse aims to remove a doubt that may engage the hearts of the disbelievers; a doubt based on a disqualification. This (disqualification) is that

1 Translators note: A verbal noun (*al-maṣdar*) expresses the verbal idea of the verb of which it is the source, in the form of a noun.

God has carried on a conversation (up until this point in the chapter) in demonstrating His lordship of everything, which lordship entails resurrection and recompense. (Furthermore), He mentioned His absolute kingdom and power, and He mentioned His creation and His governance (of it). However, He did not mention His knowledge which encompasses them (the disbelievers), their states, and deeds! This is while the significance of knowledge is such that resurrection and recompense would not be accomplished without it.

It is possible they imagined that (human) deeds, due to their large number, are beyond enumeration, and that their accurate reckoning is unfeasible, especially what the hearts hide of deeds. Such imagination is because the human being tends to measure and gauge things based on himself and weighs them according to his abilities, and he is incapable of measuring or reckoning the particulars of human deeds, which consist of different, completed movements, especially the deeds of the heart, which are hidden in their different aspects.

Consequently, this verse rebuts such a conjecture in that the manifestation of speech and its concealment are alike for God. This is because *...surely He is Cognizant of what is in the hearts.* The context testifies that the intent is to convey that the concealment of deeds and their manifestation is alike for God, and that He has mentioned the concealment of speech and its manifestation from the perspective of the manifestation of the meaning of concealment and manifestation of it by manifestation and concealment.

أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٤﴾

(67:14) Does He, Who Created, not know while He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware?

The interrogative in this verse is in a rhetorical style which aims to convey disapproval and rebuke (by the speaker) coupled with surprise (on the speaker's part in respect of a deed by the addressee, which is not befitting him/her (which in this case refers to the conjecture of the disbelievers that the large number of human deeds would be beyond God's enumeration and accurate reckoning)). Such a rhetorical interrogative is known as *al-istif'hām al-inkāriy*. This rhetorical interrogative is taken as proof of God's knowledge of the deeds of His creation, the apparent thereof and the hidden, the secretive thereof and the manifest.

The deeds of creation include the deeds of human beings done with their free choice and volition. These are attributed to their doers, yet it is God who intends and creates them via the free choice of the human being and via the requirements of all the rest of the (relevant) causes and factors. Thus He is the Creator of the substances/realities of things, and the One who determines

and measures the effects of things, however they may be. He is the connective between things and their effects, and the One who conveys the things to their effects.

God says *Allah is the Creator of everything and He has charge over everything* (39:62). And He says *Who creates, then makes complete, and Who makes* (*things*) *according to a measure, then guides* (*them to their goal*) (87:2-3). Therefore, God encompasses and is aware of the substance/reality of His creation and its effects, and from the effects of His creation are their apparent and hidden deeds, and what they hide and make manifest. Hence, how can God encompass and be aware of something but not know it?!

This verse contains an indication that the states of things and their deeds are not beyond their creation. This is because God has sought to prove by means of His knowledge of who He has created, that He has knowledge of the particularities of their states and deeds. Had it not been that the states and deeds (of subjects) were part of the existence of their subjects, such proving would be incomplete. However, the states and deeds are from the necessities of their subjects, and the one to whom the existence of a thing is attributed has the effects of its existence attributed to him too.

...while He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware: It means God has penetrating knowledge of the inner of things. He is well acquainted with the particulars of the existence of things and their effects. This part of the verse is a statement that expresses the state (*jumlah ḥāliyyah*) for what is before it, explaining it with justification, while the two names of God (mentioned in this verse) are from His beautiful names with which the verse concludes in order to reiterate its contents.

Examining Narrations

(1) Imām al-Ṣādiq said the following with respect to the speech of God ... *that He may try you—which of you is best in deeds...*(67:2): 'It does not mean "the most abundant of you (all) in deeds" rather it means "the most correct or proper of you (all) in deeds." Surely "correctness" is the fear and awe of God, and genuine, sincere, and good intention.' Thereafter the Imām said: 'to keep to an act till it is rendered sincere (for God) is more difficult than the act (itself). Hearken! The pure, sincere act is one where you do not want anyone to praise you for it save God, while the intention is superior to the act. Hearken! Indeed, the intention is the act (itself)!' Then he recited the following verse *Say: Every one acts according to his manner* (shākilatih)... (17:84) and

said: 'it means "according to his intention."'[1]

(2) Abu Qatādah relates: 'I asked the Prophet about the speech of God, which says ...*which of you is best in deeds*... (67:2). I said: 'what did He mean by it?' The Prophet replied: 'He means which of you is best in intellect/reasoning (*ʿaqlan*)'. Then he said: '(He means which of you is) the most complete in intellect/reasoning (*ʿaqlan*), the most fearful (of God) for God's sake, the most observant and careful regarding what God has commanded and forbidden. This is even if he was the least among you in doing voluntary good deeds'.'[2]

(3) The Prophet recited the speech of God *Blessed is He in Whose hand is the kingdom, and He has power over all things* (67:1). *Who created death and life that He may try you—which of you is best in deeds*... (67:2) then he said: '(it means) which of you is best in intellect/reasoning (*ʿaqlan*), the most God-fearing in respect of God's prohibitions, and the swiftest to God's obedience'.[3]

(4) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* explains the verse *Who created the seven heavens one above another*... (67:3) as follows: 'one of them (congruently fitting) on top of the other'. And it explains the verse ...*you see no incongruity* (min tafāwut) *in the creation of the Most Merciful*... (67:3) as follows: '(you see) no corruption (in the creation)'. And it explains the verse *Then turn back the eye*... (67:4) to mean: 'look at the dominion/kingdom of the heavens and the earth'. And it explains the verse ...*with lamps*... (67:5) to mean: 'with stars'. And it explains the verse ...*they shall hear a loud moaning*... (67:7) to mean: 'occurrence/happening'. And it explains the verse ... *almost bursting for fury*... (67:7) to mean: '(almost bursting with fury) on the enemies of God'. And it explains the verse *And they shall say: Had we but listened or pondered, we would not have been among the inmates of the burning fire* (67:10) as follows: 'They heard and understood but did not obey and did not accept. The proof that they heard and understood but did not accept, is the speech of God (that follows) *So they shall acknowledge their sin, but far will be* (*forgiveness*) *from the inmates of the burning* fire (67:11).'

Author's comment: the Imām means that the verse proves that the meaning of not listening and not pondering (in 67:10) is (actually) the lack of obedience and acceptance *after* listening and pondering. That is why God has named that

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1 *Al-Kāfī* through his chain of transmission from Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah, from him.

2 *Majma' al-bayān*

3 *Majma' al-bayān* from ('Abdullah) Ibn 'Umar from him.

speech of theirs (that is, 67:10) as acknowledgement of sin (in 67:11). An act is not considered a sin from its doer save after knowledge of the aspect of its evilness by means of hearing or pondering.

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Verses 15-22

The verses in this section repeatedly mention signs of God's organization and management of the universe, which prove His lordship. These are coupled with warnings and intimidations, such as the verse *He it is Who made the earth docile and manageable for you, therefore go about on the surface of the earth, and eat of His sustenance, and to Him is the return after death* (67:15). And the verse *Have they not seen the birds above them expanding* (*their wings*) *and contracting* (*them*)*? What is it that withholds them save the Beneficent Allah? Surely He sees everything* (67:19). These verses occur after such verses as *Who created death and life that He may try you—which of you is best in deeds; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving* (67:2), and the verse *Who created the seven heavens one above another; you see no incongruity in the creation of the Most Merciful; then look again, can you see any disorder?* (67:3) And the verse *And certainly We have adorned this lower heaven with lamps and We have made these missiles for the satans, and We have prepared for them the chastisement of burning* (67:5).

هُوَ الَّذِی جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِی مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِهِ ۖ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ ﴿١٥﴾

(67:15) He it is Who made the earth docile and manageable for you, therefore go about on the surface of the earth, and eat of His sustenance, and to Him is the return after death.

A vessel that is docile and manageable (*zalūlan*) is a vessel, mounting and riding which is easy without it shaking and trembling, and without it being unruly and recalcitrant. The word *al-manākib* is the plural of *al-mankab*. It is the point where the upper arm and the shoulder meet (shoulder joint). It is used figuratively for the surface of the earth. Al-Rāghib writes: "the figurative use of it (that is, the word *al-manākib*) for the (surface of the) earth is as the figurative use of the word *al-ẓahr* for it (that is, for the [surface of the] earth), such as in the verse ...*He would not leave on the back of it* (*ẓahrihā,* that is, on the back of the earth) *any creature*... (35:45)." Describing the earth as docile, manageable, and tractable (*zalūlan*), and rendering its back (or surface) as 'shoulder joints' (*al-manākib*) where a human being is able to settle on it and walk on it, is on account of the earth's submission and subservience to different kinds of human activity, without resistance. This is while the earth being docile and tractable (*zalūlan*), and having 'shoulder joints' (*al-manākib*), has been explained from different perspectives, all of which mean what we have mentioned above.

... and eat of His sustenance, and to Him is the return after death: The

imperative to eat of the earth's sustenance, in this verse, is in order to denote permissibility while the words *al-nushūr* and *al-nashr* mean "enlivening the dead after their death." The root or original meaning of these words is the unrolling of a scroll and the unrolling of cloth when a person spreads the scroll and the cloth out after they had been folded.

Hence the meaning obtained is: "He (God) it is who rendered the earth compliant, amenable, and subservient to you all. All of you are able to settle on its back (that is, its surface) and walk on it. You eat from its sustenance, which He has measured out for you, (and you do so) by different means of seeking, application, and action on it."

... and to Him is the return after death: This means that the resurrection of the dead by them being taken out of the earth, and them being enlivened for reckoning and recompense, lies or rests with God. This is while the specification of resurrection lying with God means underlining that the judgement and the command for resurrection lies with Him along with the enlivening (of creatures) on the day of resurrection. Thus He is your Lord. He is the one who manages the affairs of your worldly lives by stabilizing the earth and rendering it smooth, and guiding you to the purpose and goal of your lives. And with Him lies the judgment and the command for resurrection, reckoning, and recompense.

Finally, the description of the earth as docile and manageable (*zalūlan*), and the description of the humans on its 'shoulder joints' (*manākib,* that is, surface), is a manifest hint to what recent scientific studies have led to, regarding the earth being a planetary sphere or globe that is ambulant.

أَأَمِنتُم مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَن يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ ﴿١٦﴾

(67:16) Are you secure of him who is in the heaven that he will not make the earth to swallow you up? Then lo! It shall be in a state of commotion.

This verse serves as warning and intimidation (for the disbelievers) after the establishment of proof (of God's lordship). It also serves as censure and rebuke for them for taking liberties in respect of the matter of (God's) lordship, and for their negligence and inattention to gratitude for the blessings of their lord, (which they were supposed to demonstrate) by means of submitting and yielding to His lordship and rejecting what they had invented of peers (for Him).

The meaning of the part of this verse that says ...*him who is in the heaven*... (*man fī al-samā'*) refers to the angels that inhabit it; those that have been made in charge of cosmic incidents and events. This is while the (third person) singular pronoun (he/it) inherent to the singular present tense verb *yakhsifa* (*he/it* shall make the earth to swallow up) refers to the relative pronoun *man* (meaning:

him/it who) due to its wording. The phenomenon of 'the swallowing up of a people by the earth', mentioned in this verse ... *the earth to swallow you up...* means its splitting and cleaving apart and causing them to disappear into its depths. This is while the word *al-mawr*, on the basis of what is found in the Qurʾān commentary *Majmaᶜ al-Bayān* means 'the frequency of coming and going (rolling and churning) like the waves'.

Thus the meaning of this verse is: "do you think you are secure in your rejection of God's lordship, from the angels inhabiting the heavens; angels who have been made in charge of the matters of the universe in that they will not make the earth cleave apart and cause you to disappear into it with God's permission? In that case then, the earth shall convulse, in the form of comings and goings, by its quaking and trembling."

It is suggested that the referent of ...*him who is in the heaven...* is to God, and that the mention of Him being in the heaven refers to His power, authority, governance and command in the heaven. This is because it is impossible that God is in a specific place or in a specific direction or surrounded by a realm from the realms. Although this interpretation has no problem to it, yet it is contrary to the apparent meaning.

أَمْ أَمِنتُم مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَن يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ۖ فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ ﴿١٧﴾

(67:17) Or are you secure of him who is in the heaven that he will not send down upon you a stone storm? Then shall you know how was My warning.

The word *al-ḥāṣib* in this verse means 'the wind which comes accompanied with pebbles and stones'. The meaning of this verse is 'or do you think you are secure from him who is in the heavens in that he will not send down upon you a wind consisting of pebbles and stones as he sent down on the people of Lot? This is attested in the speech of God which says *Surely We sent upon them a stone storm, except Lot's followers...* (54:34).'

The statement, *Then shall you know how was My warning* contains the word *al-nadhīr*. It is a verbal noun, meaning 'warning, cautioning, putting one in fear, putting one on his/her guard' (*al-indhār*). This statement is a ramification or a consequence of what can be understood from the preceding speech regarding their rejection and disbelief in God's lordship and their feeling secure from His punishment, and the meaning of the verse is obvious.

It is also said that the word *al-nadhīr* is an adjective in the meaning of (the active participle) *al-mundhir*, meaning 'one who warns and cautions, one who instills fear'. This is understood to refer to the Prophet but this interpretation is absurd.

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ ﴿١٨﴾

(67:18) And certainly those before them rejected (the truth), then how (terrible) was My disapproval!

The word *nakīr* in this verse means 'punishment and the altering of blessings', or it means 'denial'. This verse is as a witness or testifier by which the truth of the content of the previous verse, in terms of what it contains of a threat, is sought to be testified to, which is *Then shall you know how was My warning* (67:17).

Hence, the meaning obtained is: "And certainly those before them of the destroyed peoples, belied and denied My messengers and denied My lordship. So how terrible was My punishment and the manner in which I changed the blessings on them!? Or how terrible was my denial of them whereby I destroyed them and eradicated them!?"

This verse contains a rhetorical shift (*al-iltifāt*) in discourse from second person (in the previous verses) to third person here where it says ...*before them*... notifying thereby of the fall in estimation of the disbelievers and of their unworthiness of having the honor of a direct (divine) address. This is due to their ignorance and neglect in pondering over the signs of God's lordship and due to their lack of fear and worry of their Lord's displeasure. Thus God's address abstained from addressing them directly in respect of what was being recited to them of knowledge and wisdom, and instead addressed the Prophet (so that he may convey the same to them).

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صَافَّاتٍ وَيَقْبِضْنَ ۚ مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا الرَّحْمَٰنُ ۚ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٩﴾

(67:19) Have they not seen the birds above them expanding (their wings) and contracting (them)? What is it that holds them save the Merciful Allah? Surely He sees everything.

The clause, ...*the birds above them*...means their flight in the air above them. The feminine plural active participle *ṣāffātin*, which is in reference to the birds, means 'the extension or spreading out of the wings of the birds (in a straight line) during flight', while the third person feminine plural present tense verb *yaqbiḍna*, in reference to the birds, means 'their contracting or closing their wings during flight'. This is while the reason the *plural* active participle *ṣāffātin* and the *plural* present tense verb *yaqbiḍna* occur in this verse, in reference to the word *al-ṭayr* (which is singular, its plural being *al-ṭuyūr*), is because the intent of the word *al-ṭayr* (the bird), in this verse, is to signify the class or species of birds (that is, it is understood here as a generic or collective noun (birds) (but

it is also a unit noun—*nomen unitatis*)).

What is it that holds them save the Merciful Allah? It features like a response to an implicit question that a questioner asks, saying: 'what is the meaning of them (the disbelievers) turning their sights or attention to look at the birds extending and contracting their wings in flight above them?' The response made is *What is it that holds them save the Merciful Allah*?

The steadiness of the bird in the air during flight without dropping to earth, even if reliant on natural causes akin to the stability of the human being on the surface of the earth and the stability of the fish in water and all the rest of the natural things that rely on natural causes, has these causes (ultimately) terminate with God. However, when the causes of some occurrences are not apparent to the human being at first glance, it is easier for the human being, on observing something, to realize that it is God who is the ultimate cause with whom a thing's occurrence and existence terminates. That is why, God draws their attention in this verse to turn their gaze to the birds in the sky, using that as proof of His unity in lordship.

Many things of this sort have been mentioned in God's speech such as the sky remaining aloft without any pillars, the stability of the earth, the safe sailing of ships on water, and the diversity of fruits, colors, tongues, and others, for which the *near* natural cause is hidden in general. In such cases it is easy for the simple mind to understand that these things rely on God. Thereafter, when and if the human being learns of the existence of the *near* causes of these things and phenomena, by means of intellectual effort, he will feel the very same need to discover their causes till he arrives at God (as the ultimate cause), and to God is the ultimate goal.

(Al-Zamakhshari) says the following in his *al-Kashshāf*:

> If you said: 'why does the verse use a verb for the phenomenon of the contraction of the wings (that is, the verb *yaqbiḍna*) rather than using the feminine plural active participle *qābiḍātin* (akin to *ṣāffātin*, which it did for the phenomenon of extending and spreading out of the wings)?' then I would reply: 'This is because the basis in flying is the extension or spreading out of the wings (in a single line), in the air, just like swimming in the water. The basis in swimming is the extension and stretching out of the limbs. This is while contraction or closing or folding is incidental to extending and stretching, (and it is) in order to seek to demonstrate movement with it. Thus the verse uses a verb (*yaqbiḍna*) for what is incidental and not basic, in that the birds spread out and expand their wings (*ṣāffātin*) (which is essential to flying), while contracting or folding the wings occurs sometimes

(which is incidental), as is the case with swimming'.

This is based on the notion that the divine sign (intended to be conveyed by this verse) is the sum total of God's speech ...*them expanding* (*their wings*) (*ṣāffātin*) *and contracting* (*them*) (*yaqbiḍna*)...

(However), it is (also) possible to understand that the divine sign intended to be conveyed by this verse is that the birds do not drop from the sky while they are stretching and expanding their wings, and another sign is that perhaps they contract their wings and yet do not drop from the sky while contracting them.

It is clear that what is intended by the mention of the flight of birds in the air (in this verse), which mention follows the mention of the earth being rendered docile and tractable while the human being is on its surface (in 67:15) is to demonstrate God's grace, favor and mercy.

أَمَّنْ هَٰذَا الَّذِي هُوَ جُندٌ لَّكُمْ يَنصُرُكُم مِّن دُونِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ ۚ إِنِ الْكَافِرُونَ إِلَّا فِي غُرُورٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

(67:20) Or who is it that will be a host for you to assist you besides the Merciful Allah? The unbelievers are only in deception.

This verse serves as censure and rebuke to the disbelievers for taking deities other than God so that the former may help them. That is why the verse's mode of address shifts rhetorically (*al-iltifāt*) from the third person (in the previous verses) to second person here. Thus this verse addresses them (directly) in order to intensify the censure and rebuke made against them.

The verse means 'rather, who is it that can be pointed out to so that it may be said: "this is your host who will help you, to the exclusion of the Merciful, if the latter intended you evil or intended punishment for you? Indeed, there is none, excluding the Merciful, who can help you against Him!" Therefore this verse points to their error in taking some of God's creatures as deities so that the latter may help them in moments of distress and misfortune. The error lies in the fact that these supposed deities themselves are owned by God and are His creatures, unable to benefit or cause harm to themselves or to others.

And when they fail to produce an answer, God responds by His speech ... *The unbelievers are only in deception.* This means deception has overcome and deceived them, and consequently it has made them believe that what they call to of their deities, are (truly) their deities.

أَمَّنْ هَٰذَا الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ ۚ بَل لَّجُّوا فِي عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ ﴿٢١﴾

(67:21) Or who is it that will give you sustenance if He should withhold His sustenance? Nay! They persist in disdain and aversion.

This verse means: "Rather, who is it that can be pointed to, in that he is the one who can feed you if God were to withhold His sustenance (from you), in the sense that the one pointed to would stand in God's place, and feed you?" Then God responds by His speech *Nay! They persist in disdain and aversion.* This means that the truth has become manifest and clear to them, however they refuse to surrender and submit to it by believing in it and assenting to it, and thereafter obeying it, rather they persist in avoiding the truth, and persist in being further away from it, and they continue to be averse to it, persistently.

أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَىٰ أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

(67:22) What! Is he who goes prone upon his face better guided or he who walks upright upon a straight path?

The phrase *ikbāb al-shay ʿalā wajhihi* means 'to cause something to fall on its face'. Al-Zamakhshari in *al-Kashshāf* writes: 'the (masculine third person singular past tense) verb *akabba* (whose active participle is *mukibban*, and which occurs in this verse) means: 'he went into prostration or threw himself down on his face and became prostate or prone'.'

The interrogative in this verse is in a rhetorical style which aims to convey disapproval, censure, and rebuke (by the speaker) regarding the equivalence of the two states (mentioned in this verse). This rhetorical interrogative is known as *al-istif'hām al-inkāriy*. It serves to subject the disbelievers to this disapproval and rebuke after having cast the veil of invisibility over them (thereby rendering them as if invisible and inconsequential), refusing them the honor of acknowledging their presence, and refusing them the honor of (a direct divine) address after the trait of stubborn insistence on disbelief having had become established in them. Thus the meaning of this verse is that the disbelievers, due to their stubborn insistence on a strange kind of arrogance, and a reluctance and distaste for truth, are like a person who treads a path while he is prone on his face. He does not see what is on the path of an elevation or depression, or of an inclination or a hole. Such a walker is therefore unlike the one who walks upright on the straight path where he can see where he is placing his foot and what he is to encounter from the path due to (his) walking upright, and what he intends in terms of his goal from the path.

These disbelievers are walking on the path of life while opposing the truth despite having knowledge of it. Thus they are closing their eyes from the knowledge of what is incumbent on them to know, and they are closing their eyes from acting on what is incumbent on them to act on. They are not submitting to the truth so that they may perceive the matter rightly and tread the path of life while they are upright on the straight path so that they may be safe from destruction!

It is apparent that the content of this verse is a general parable epitomizing the state of the importunate, ignorant disbeliever who persists on his ignorance, and the discerning believer searching for the truth.

Examining Narrations

(1) Imām al-Bāqir said: 'The heart is of four types. A heart which contains hypocrisy and faith, a heart that is overturned, a heart that is sealed, and a heart that is radiant and luminous'. (The transmitter of the report from the Imām (by the name of Sa'd) said: 'I asked: 'what is the radiant and luminous heart?' The Imām replied: 'it is in the form of a lamp'. (The Imām continued): 'As for the sealed heart, then that is the heart of the hypocrite. As for the radiant and luminous heart, that is the heart of the believer. If He (God) grants it (a blessing), it is grateful and if He (God) tries it (with an affliction), it is patient. As for the heart that is overturned, that is the heart of the polytheist', and then the Imām recited this verse *What! Is he who goes prone upon his face better guided or he who walks upright upon a straight path?* (67:22) (The Imām continued his speech, saying): 'As for the heart that has both faith and hypocrisy in it, then that pertains to a group of people who are with *al-ṭā'if* (one who goes round and about, one who visits). So if one among them meets his death on hypocrisy, he perishes, and if he meets his death on faith, he is saved'.[1]

Author's comment: The author of *Tafsīr al-Burhān* has narrated this report from Ibn Bābwayhi via his chain of transmission from al-Fuḍayl, from Sa'd al-Khaffāf from Abu Ja'far al-Bāqir, where the Imām is attributed to have said: 'Surely the hearts are of four types....' And thereafter the report continues (akin to the report above) till its end save that it has, for the 'radiant and luminous heart', the words: 'And the radiant heart is more luminous'.

As for the part of the report that says: 'As for the heart that has both faith and hypocrisy in it, then that pertains to a group of people who are with *al-ṭā'if*, then the meaning of that is 'the wandering/roaming satan' (*al-ṭā'if al-shayṭāni*) who may touch or afflict a human being (by means of a visitation in the form of an affliction or evil thought). God says *Surely those who guard* (*against evil*), *when a visitation from the Satan* (ṭā'if min al-shayṭān) *afflicts them they become mindful, then lo! They see* (7:201). Therefore the meaning is that such people (that is, those whose hearts contain both faith and hypocrisy) live with a 'wandering/roaming satan' who touches them time and again. Hence if death comes upon them while the 'wandering/roaming satan' is with them, they perish,

1 *Al-Kāfī* through his chain of transmission from Sa'd, from him.

however if death comes upon them while they are in the state of faith, then they are saved.

Also, do know that there are reports which apply (*taṭbīq*) this verse *What! Is he who goes prone upon his face better guided or he who walks upright upon a straight path?* (67:22) to whoever strays from the path of the belief in the guardianship (*wilāya*) of Imām ʿAlī and strays from the path of whoever follows him and supports him, respectively. Such reports are examples of the application of the verse to instances of it (*al-jary wa al-taṭbīq*), and ultimately God knows best.

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Verses 23-30

This section of the chapter contains additional verses by means of which God reminds them (the disbelievers); verses which prove God's unity in creation and governance (of the cosmos), coupled with warnings and intimidations. These verses are in the context of the aim and purpose of this chapter, which is to remind of God's oneness coupled with warnings. However, when God had previously pointed out their (the disbeliever's) insistence and obdurate intransigence against the truth, (which He did) in ...*They persist in disdain and aversion* (67:21), (here) He changed the context by avoiding to address them directly. Instead He shifted the discourse to addressing the Prophet, instructing him to counteract and confront their speech and to convey to their ears His verses on creation and governance of the cosmos, which prove and point to His unity in lordship (*al-tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah*), and which warn them of God's punishment.

These are such verses as *Say: He it is Who brought you into being and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts: little is it that you give thanks* (67:23). And the verse *Say: He it is Who multiplied you in the earth and to Him you shall be gathered* (67:24). And the verse *Say: The knowledge* (*thereof*) *is only with Allah and I am only a plain warner* (67:26). And the verse *Say: Have you considered if Allah should destroy me and those with me or have mercy on us; yet who will protect the unbelievers from a painful punishment?* (67:28). And the verse *Say: He is the Merciful Allah, we believe in Him and on Him do we rely, so you shall come to know who it is that is in clear error* (67:29).

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِى أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْـِٔدَةَ ۖ قَلِيلًا مَا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(67:23) Say: He it is Who brought you into being and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts: little is it that you give thanks.

The word *al-inshā'* means 'creating or originating or initiating a thing from its very inception, and its upbringing'. This is while what the end part of this verse says, which is ...*little is it that you give thanks* has a tone of reproof and admonition to it. Similar phrases recur in (similar contexts in) more than one place in God's speech, such as in 23:78 and in 32:9. These prove that God's origination of the human being and His equipping the human being with the senses and the faculty of thought and intellect are from the greatest blessings of God, which the human being cannot appreciate (fully).

What is meant by God creating or originating (*al-inshā'*) a human being is

not simply the creation of the human being in whatever way, rather it means his creation and origination without a prior material precedent for it (that could be copied or be modelled upon) as He points out in His speech where He describes the human being's creation as one that advances from state to state *And certainly We created man of an extract of clay* (23:12), *Then We made him a small seed in a firm resting-place* (23:13), *Then We made the seed a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made* (*in*) *the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow* (ansha'nāhu) *into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators* (23:14).

So the lump of flesh becoming or transforming into a thinking, hearing, seeing human being, (and) with the addition of the human soul to it, becoming or transforming into another creation, is not the same as the different kinds of (prior) material creations that occur on the substance or matter of the human being from the moment it is taken from the earth and thereafter rendered semen, a clot, and then a lump of flesh. This is because those are sequential *material* stages or states unlike the substance/material of the human being becoming or transforming into a *conscious* human being. Therefore, there is no precedent for such a transformation which corresponds to it or resembles it. This is origination (*al-inshā'*)!

Similar to it is the following verse *And one of His signs is that He created you from dust, then lo! You are mortals* (*who*) *scatter* (30:20). Observe particularly the occurrence of the particle of surprise and suddenness *idhā* rendered 'lo!' in—'then lo! You are mortals who scatter!' (*thumma idhā antum basharun tantashirūn*)

Therefore, the beginning part of this verse which says *Say: He it is Who brought you* (ansh'akum) *into being...* means the creation or origination of the human being while the succeeding part of this verse that reads *...and made for you* (ja'ala lakum) *the ears and the eyes and the hearts* means the equipping of the human being with the senses and the faculty of thought and intellect. In this verse, the verb *ja 'ala* (translated as '(God) made') is a 'making' in the nature of or in the meaning of 'creating or originating' (*al-ja 'l al-inshā 'iy*) similar to the 'creative or original making' of the human soul as the following verse indicates *And He it is Who made for you* (ansh'a lakum) *the ears and the eyes and the hearts; little is it that you give thanks* (23:78).

Therefore the human being, in light of his special creation or origination, and his condition where he hears and sees, is distinguished from the inanimate and plant world, while in light of his possession of the heart, which refers to the reflective (intelligent) soul, he is distinguished from the rest of the animal world. This is while the reason the verse suffices with the mention of 'hearing'

and 'seeing' to the rest of the senses such as touch, taste, and smell is because these two senses are the supports/props, and it is not farfetched that the referents of 'hearing' and 'seeing' is a reference to generally all the apparent senses from the perspective of citing a part for the whole.

The statement (at the end), *...little is it that you give thanks* means that all of you give little thanks for this great blessing or for these great blessings.[1]

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِى ذَرَأَكُمْ فِى الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

(67:24) Say: He it is Who multiplied you in the earth and to Him you shall be gathered.

The word *al-dhar'u* means 'creation' (*al-khalq*) while the meaning of ... *multiplied you in the earth...* (dhara'akum fī al-arḍ) is a reference to their creation such that they are associated or connected with the earth, clinging or holding fast to it, being attached to and fond of it. Thus their perfection is incomplete save by means of deeds associated or connected with the earthly matter in as much as God has beautified earthly matter with what the human soul is attracted to and to which it gravitates in its hastened worldly life. This is so that the virtuous may be distinguished from the vicious by (being tested by) it (that is, by the attractive earthly adornments). God says *Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them* (*as to*) *which of them is best in works* (18:7). *And most surely We will make what is on it bare ground without herbage* (18:8).

...and to Him you shall be gathered: This is a reference to the phenomenon of resurrection and recompense, and the decisive promise.

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَٰذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

(67:25) And they say: When shall this threat be (executed) if you are truthful?

The meaning of 'this threat' mentioned in this verse is a reference to the promised resurrection and gathering (of mankind), which they (the disbelievers)

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1 In light of this interpretation of this part of the verse, (*qalīlan mā tashkurūn*), the particle *mā* is identified as the redundant particle *mā* (*mā zā'idata*) and the word *qalīlan* is grammatically identified as (the adjective of) the (implicit) absolute object (*al-maf'ūl al-muṭlaq*). Hence, this part of the verse is implicitly understood as occurring as *tashkurūna shukran qalīlan* (you all give (very) little thanks). It is also suggested that the particle *mā* in *qalīlan mā tashkurūn* is grammatically the infinitive-forming conjunctive particle or the gerundival *mā* (*mā maṣdariyyah*), in which case this part of the verse is implicitly understood as occurring as *qalīlan shukrukum* (little is your gratitude/thanks). (Auth.)

mention in the spirit of mockingly seeking to accelerate its occurrence.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

(67:26) Say: The knowledge (thereof) is only with Allah and I am only a plain warner.

This verse occurs as a response to their (mocking) query *And they say: When shall this threat be* (*executed*) *if you are truthful?* (67:26). The meaning obtained is that its knowledge rests with God. None knows it save Him, as He says ... *none but He shall manifest it at its time...* (7:187). This is while I (that is, the Prophet) am only a manifest warner. I was instructed to inform you that you shall be resurrected and gathered to Him. As for when that will be, then that is something I do not possess knowledge of.

This is on the basis of what can be understood of the verse in light of where it occurs in the specific context (of this chapter), which is that of a response to the question about the time of the occurrence of the resurrection and the gathering (of mankind). In such a case the definite particle *al*—the—(prefixed to the word *ilm* (knowledge) becoming *al-ilm* (the knowledge)) is that of specificity or determinativeness (*al al-ʿahdiyyah*) where the meaning is the (specific) knowledge of the time of resurrection and gathering (of mankind). However, if this definite particle *al* (prefixed to the word *ilm*) is the generic *al* (*al al-jinsiyyah*), on the basis of what this part of the verse suggests in and of itself, which says ... *The knowledge is only with Allah....* then the meaning is: 'the reality of knowledge (in and of itself) is with God. None of it can be comprehended save by His permission, as He says ...*and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases...* (2:255), and He did not please that I should know of that (that is, the resurrection) save that it shall occur and I am warning you of it. As for when it shall occur then I have no knowledge of it.

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ زُلْفَةً سِيئَتْ وُجُوهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقِيلَ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَدَّعُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

(67:27) But when they shall see it nigh, the faces of those who disbelieve shall be sorry, and it shall be said; this is that which you used to call for.

The word *al-zulfah* that occurs in this verse means 'nearness, proximity'. Its intent here is 'that which is near, imminent'. Or it is from the perspective of (when a person such as Zayd is described by means of a verbal noun, such as *ʿadl* (meaning 'justice') such as saying: Zayd is justice (itself)—*zayd ʿadl* (which exaggerated manner of description is for the sake of emphasis in contrast to describing him by means of the active participle *ʿādil* (meaning 'just') such as saying: Zayd is a just person—*zayd ʿādil*).

The object pronoun *hu* (it) suffixed to the plural verb *ra'aw* (they see) (becoming *ra'awhu*—they shall see *it*) refers to the threat (mentioned in 67:25). It is also suggested to refer to 'punishment'. The meaning arrived at therefore is 'when they shall see the mentioned threat near, in that it is imminent and right upon them then that would render the faces of those who had disbelieved in it, sad, pained, and woeful, and the effect of defeat and loss shall manifest on their facial expressions.'

...and it shall be said; this is that which you used to call for: It is said that 'you used to call' (*tad'ūn*) and 'to call' (*tadda'ūn*) have the same meaning, like 'to store' (*tadkharūn*) and 'to store up' (*taddakhirūn*).[1] Thus the meaning arrived at is: "It shall be said to them, this is the threat which you used to ask about and which you used to seek to expedite by your speech 'when shall this threat be?'" The apparent context suggests that the speakers are the angels, by the command of God. However, it is also said that the speaker is among the disbelievers, with some of them saying this to others.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَهْلَكَنِيَ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ مَعِيَ أَوْ رَحِمَنَا فَمَنْ يُجِيرُ الْكَافِرِينَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٨﴾

(67:28) Say: Have you considered if (*in*) Allah should destroy me and those with me or have mercy on us; yet who will protect the unbelievers from a painful punishment?[2]

The meaning of this verse is: '(O Muḥammad) ask them (the disbelievers) the following: "tell me (all of you), if God were to destroy me and those who are with me of the believers or have mercy on us and not destroy us, yet who is the one who will protect and aid the disbelievers—and this is yourselves; you, who have disbelieved in God and therefore have entitled yourselves to painful punishment—(so who will protect you) from a painful punishment which He has categorically threatened you with?"' It means: 'my destruction and that of those who are with me or our continued existence due to the mercy of my Lord, shall not avail you at all, with respect to punishment, which will definitely afflict

1 Editor's note: Readers should note that we have simplified the author's grammatical discussion on this phrase to make it easier to understand the nuances. Therefore certain parts have been omitted in the translation.

2 The particle *in* (if) in this verse is a conditional particle. The condition (or the premise of the conditional statement) is the part of this verse that reads ...*Allah should destroy me and those with me or have mercy on us*... while the result (of this conditional statement) is the part of this verse that reads ... *yet who will protect the unbelievers from a painful punishment?* (Auth.)

you due to your disbelief in God.'

It is said that the Meccan disbelievers used to pray against or invoke destruction on the Messenger of God and the believers and so the Messenger of God was instructed to say to them: 'if God were to destroy us or allow us to remain alive then our matter rests with Him while we hope for goodness and safety from Him due to His mercy. However, as for yourselves, what will you do? Who shall protect you from a painful punishment due to your disbelief in God?'

قُلْ هُوَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ آمَنَّا بِهِ وَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ۖ فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٢٩﴾

(67:29) Say: He is the Merciful (Allah), we believe in Him and on Him do we rely, so you shall come to know who it is that is in clear error.

The masculine third person singular personal pronoun *huwa* (He) in this verse refers to the being in favor of whose unity he (the Prophet) was calling the disbelievers to (which is the being of God). This was the same being who they (the unbelievers) were invoking against him (that is, against the Prophet). Therefore the meaning arrived at is: 'Say (O Muḥammad), the one in favor of whose unity I am calling you to while you are invoking Him against me and against those who are with me, is the Merciful One; One whose blessings pervade everything! We believe in Him and on Him do we rely without inclining or relying on anything apart from Him. So you, O disbelievers, shall come to know who it is who is on manifest error. We or you?'

It is mentioned in *al-Kashshāf:*

> "If it is asked: 'why has the grammatical object of the first person plural past tense verb *āmannā* (we believe) made to succeed the verb *āmannā* (as follows: *āmannā bihi*—we believe in Him) while the grammatical object of the first person plural past tense verb *tawakkalnā* (we rely) is made to precede the verb *tawakkalnā* (as follows: *ʿalayhi tawakkalnā*—on Him do we rely)?' Then I would respond with: 'that is due to the verb *āmannā* (we believe) occurring in order to expose the disbelievers where it occurs following their mention, as if it was said: 'we believe (in Him) and do not disbelieve as you have disbelieved'. Then the verse says: 'and on Him do we rely specifically. We do not rely on what you all have relied on from your people and wealth.'"'

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَصْبَحَ مَاؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَنْ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِمَاءٍ مَعِينٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

(67:30) Say: Have you considered if your water should go down, who is it then that will bring you flowing water?

The verbal noun *al-ghawr* means 'the disappearance of water and its seeping away into the ground'. The intent of the word here is 'that which sinks, disappears, seeps away' (*al-ghāʾir*). The word *maʿīn* means 'water that is apparent and flowing'. Therefore the meaning obtained is 'Tell me all of you. If your water sank away, seeping away into the earth then who is it that shall bring you water that is apparent and flowing?''

There are transmitted reports that apply (*taṭbīq*) these verses to the guardianship (*wilāyah*) of Imām 'Alī and to his opponents. These reports are in the spirit of the application of the verse's meaning to specific (possible) instances of it (*al-jary*) and not in the manner of the explanation of the verse (*tafsīr*).

End of Chapter 67

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Chapter 68

Sūrah Al-Qalam (The Pen)

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

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Verses 1-33

Introduction

This chapter comforts the Prophet in the face of the polytheists' accusation that he is mad. It gladdens him through a beauteous promise and reminds him to be grateful for his noble character. It unilaterally forbids him from obeying them or ceding to their cajoling; instead, it commands him to be steadfast in the face of the divine decree.

The overall context of the verses situates them in Mecca. However, it is narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās and Qatādah that the beginning of the chapter—the first sixteen verses, up until *We will brand him on the nose* (68:16)—was revealed in Mecca, whereas the next seventeen verses—up until *did they but know* (68:33)—were revealed in Medina. Then, the next fifteen verses—until *so that they write* (*it*) *down* (68:47)—were revealed in Mecca, and the rest of the chapter—the remaining four verses—was revealed in Medina. There is a point here, since seventeen verses—from *Surely We will try them* (68:17) to *did they but know* (68:33)—better resemble Medinan rather than Meccan verses.

Commentary

ن وَٱلْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ ﴿١﴾

(68:1) Nūn. I swear by the pen (*qalam*) and what they write (*yasṭurūn*)

The verse begins with one of the disjointed letters which preface some chapters and which are discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Shūrā.[1]

'Pen' (*qalam*) takes its conventional meaning (that is, a writing implement). A *saṭr*—which, according to *al-Mufradāt*, is also sometimes spelled *saṭar*—means "line": a line of writing, a planted row of trees, or a line of standing people. The expression *saṭara fulān kadhā* means "he wrote line by line."

1 See Eng. Vol. 35. (Ed.)

God swears by the pen and what they write with it. A *prima facie* reading of the verses lends itself to an unconditional sense of "pen" and "what they write"; that is, it refers to anything written, since writing is one of the greatest divine blessings, through which, God guides humankind. Throughout writing, people accurately tell of far-away things and thoughts. Through writing, people can traverse the veil of time and space, and be present in far-off times and far-off places.

God reminds the human being to be grateful for these two things, and for being taught about these two things, in: *He created man, Taught him the mode of expression* (55:3-4). About the pen—*Who taught* (*to write*) *with the pen, taught man what he knew not* (96:3-5).

When God swears by the pen and what they write, He swears by a divine blessing. Frequently, elsewhere in His Word, He swears by other of His creations which are a mercy and a blessing, like the sky, the earth, the sun, the moon, the night, the day, and other things, even figs and olives.

Some exegetes say that *what* in *what they write* is gerundive (*mā maṣdariyyah*), rendering the following verb into a gerund; that is, it means "writing."

Some exegetes say that the *pen* is the pen on high, which hadith describe as the first thing that God created. *What they write* then refers to what the noble (angelic) scribes (*kirām kātibūn*) write.

Further views:

Some exegetes suggest that *they write* is an honorific plural, but really intended to be singular; this view is as you see.

Some exegetes suggest that *what they write* is the Guarded Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*).

Some also suggest that the *pen and what they write* refers to lettered men and their writings. However, all these views are weak.[1]

مَا أَنتَ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجْنُونٍ ﴿٢﴾

(68:2) By the grace of (*bi-niʿmah*) your Lord you are not mad.

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1 Editor's note: The gist of the author's explanation of verse 68:1 is as follows: This verse starts with an oath on the 'pen' and 'what they write.' The 'pen' symbolizes the traditional writing tool, and 'what they write' encompasses all forms of writing, a divine blessing that transcends time and space. This oath highlights the significance of writing in human civilization and communication. Various interpretations exist, including the pen as a celestial object and 'what they write' referring to angelic recordings or the Guarded Tablet. However, the broader emphasis is on the importance and sanctity of writing as a divine gift.

This is what God is swearing. It is addressed to the Prophet. The preposition *bi* in *bi-niʿmat* ("by the grace of") denotes causality or accompaniment. That is, it either means "you are not mad *because of*" or "*alongside* the grace of your Lord."

The context supports the idea that this 'grace' (*niʿmah*) is prophethood, since a prophet cannot suffer any mental imbalance that would threaten his ability to convey the upright, essential divine guidance which is the basis for the organization of human life. The verse refutes their accusation that he was mad; their accusation is quoted later in the chapter (*and they say: Most surely he is mad*, 68:51).

An alternate view:[1] Some exegetes say that *grace* refers to the Prophet's eloquence, perfect intellect, pleasing conduct, freedom from any kind of defect, and embodiment of all good traits. Since he manifests all good traits (including sanity), he could not be insane. However, the view which we presented previously is stronger. This and the next verses—as you will see—comfort the Prophet and gladden his noble soul, lending support to the view that this verse is meant to refute their accusation.

وَإِنَّ لَكَ لَأَجْرًا غَيْرَ مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٣﴾

(68:3) And most surely you shall have a reward (*ajr*) never to be cut off (*mamnūn*).

Mamnūn comes from the root *m-n-n*, meaning "to cut." The expression *mannahu li-sayr* mannan means "he weakened him and rendered him unable to walk." It is from a different word family than *minnah*, which (comes from a similarly spelled root but which carries connotations of "graciousness" and "gifting" and) means "to remind someone of what you have done for them so they feel heavily indebted."

'Reward' (*ajr*) is the reward before God for the messengership. This is meant to gladden the Prophet's noble soul: since God will grant him an unceasing reward for undertaking the messengership, his efforts shall not be in vain.

An alternate view on *mamnūn*: (Some aver that) that *mamnūn* (in *ghayr mamnūn*, "never to be cut off") could actually mean "reminding someone of what you have done for them so they feel heavily indebted" and troubling their life.[2] They adduce that, since God is giving the Prophet a well-deserved reward for his deeds, God would not burden the Prophet with a sense of obligation

1 Some headers have been added by the translator for ease of reading.

2 Translator's note: That is, this is the opposite understanding of *mamnūn* that ʿAllāmah expresses in the first paragraph.

for receiving this reward.

However, this is incorrect, for God owns all workers in the truest sense of ownership—in essence, in attributes, and in acts. Even though a servant of God may offer something to God, He is already the true owner of that thing, and the servant only possesses it because God has loaned it to them. God owns all, from before time to eternity, and bestows it (on His creation). When God rewards His servants in exchange for their efforts with a "wage" or "reward" as a form of trade, this is another gift from God, for God alone has the right to demand that His servants be grateful; in that, there is no difference between the Prophet and those beneath him.

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾

(68:4) And most surely you conform (yourself) to sublime morality (*khuluq*)

Khuluq is a spiritual (or psychological) trait which easily sparks deeds. *Khuluq* are divided into noble—such as chastity and bravery—and ignoble, such as gluttony and cowardice. When used alone, *khuluq* refers to a good moral trait.

Al-Rāghib says:

> *Khalq* and *khulq* originally meant the same thing, like *sharb* and *shrub*, or *ṣarm* and *ṣurm*. However, *khalq* began to be used for the external form of things which the eye sees, whereas *khulq* began to be used for inner faculties and dispositions which the intuition perceives. God uses the word *khulq* in: *And most surely you conform* (*yourself*) *to sublime morality* (khulq, 68:4).

Alone, this verse praises the handsome conduct of the Prophet. However, when viewed in context of the other verses, it implies praise of his handsome conduct on a societal level, with respect to interpersonal relations, such as upholding justice, tolerating rudeness and harassment, clemency, overlooking things, striving hard, kindness, civility, humility, and so on. At the end of volume 6 of this work[1] (the end of Sūrah al-Mā'idah), we related some of what has been narrated about the Prophet's noble characteristics.

Some exegetes understand *khulq* to mean "religion"; that is, "Islam." However, from the foregoing, it should be clear that this view is incorrect, unless it is explained in such a manner that it refers to what we just said.

فَسَتُبْصِرُ وَيُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٥﴾ بِأَيِّيكُمُ الْمَفْتُونُ ﴿٦﴾

(68:5-6) So you shall see, and they (too) shall see, which of you

1 See Eng. vol. 11 (Ed.)

(*bi-ayyikum*) is afflicted with madness.

The conjunction *so* (*fa-*) introduces a consequent of what was stated previously. That is, since you are not mad, since you are a prophet with outstanding conduct, and since you have a great reward from God, your prophetic mission will become evident, and people's inner and outer eyes will be unveiled. They will see who was really afflicted with madness: you, or those liars who accused you of madness?

Some exegetes question whether it means that the result of the prophetic mission will become clear to him and them in this world or the afterlife, since the verse can be interpreted both ways.

Each side has its advocates, but there is no reason why the verse cannot imply both, since (in this world) God made His prophet victorious over them, and His religion victorious over theirs. He made people celebrate his name and erased any trace of (his opponents) from the world. Tomorrow, they shall taste the ill effects of their deeds. They shall know that God is the clear truth, on the day they are seized by the fire. *Taste your persecution! This is what you would hasten on* (51:14).

Which of you is afflicted with madness **(bi-ayyikum al-maftūn)*:*** The preposition *bi* is extraneous and acts as a conjunction (*bā' zā'idah lli-ṣilah*). *Maftūn* is the passive participle of *fitnah*, meaning "to afflict." Here, it means "afflicted with madness" and "losing one's mind." It means that you shall see, and they shall see, which of you has been tried with madness: you or them?

Some exegetes say that *maftūn* is a verbal noun in the *maf'ūl* form, similar to the words *ma'qūl*, *maysūr*, and *ma'sūr*, as used in the expressions "he is brainless (*laysa lahu ma'qūl*)" and "chose what is easy (*maysūr*) over what is more difficult (*ma'sūr*)." Then, the preposition *bi-* in *bi-ayyikum* would mean "in/on," and the sentence would mean, "You shall see, and they shall see, on which side affliction shall fall."

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٧﴾

(68:7) Surely your Lord best knows him who errs from His way, and He best knows the followers of the right course.

This can be understood in light of the foregoing, which spoke of guidance and guidance, implying that those who accused the Prophet of madness are really those who are erring and afflicted. Their situation shall become clear, and it shall also become clear that the Prophet is guided. God affirms that because God knows better who is straying from His path and who is guided on His path. Since it is His path, He knows best who is on it and who is not. Guidance is a matter which belongs to Him.

فَلا تُطِعِ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٨﴾

(68:8) So do not yield to the rejecters.

The conjunction *so* (*fa-*) presents this as the natural conclusion of the previous verses. The definite article *al-* in *the rejectors* (*al-mukadhdhibīn*) denotes that it is a known and specific group of rejectors (rather than any rejector whatsoever; it is a *lām al-ʿahd*). Do *not yield* is unconditional, encompassing both word and deed. It means: Since these people who reject you are afflicted and erring, do not yield to them.

وَدُّوا لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُونَ (﴿٩﴾)

(68:9) They wish that you should be pliant (*tudhin*) so they (too) would be pliant.

Tudhin comes from *d-h-n*, and here means "to soften."[1] The verse means that these rejectors wish you would soften towards them and find a middle ground in your religions. They want reconciliation and religious tolerance. As is narrated, they offered, "Keep your hands off our gods, and we will keep our hands off yours."

From the foregoing, it is clear that *they* refers to all (of those who rejected the Prophet), and the conjunction *so* (*fa-*, in *so they would be pliant*) denotes what would happen next, not causality.

وَلا تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلاَّفٍ مَّهِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾ هَمَّازٍ مَّشَّاء بِنَمِيمٍ ﴿١١﴾ مَنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿١٢﴾ عُتُلٍّ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ زَنِيمٍ ﴿١٣﴾

(68:10-13) And yield not to any mean swearer, defamer, going about with slander, forbidder of good, outstepping the limits, sinful, ignoble, besides all that, base-born;

A 'swearer' (*ḥallāf*) is someone who swears oaths so often that he ends up swearing over little and big things, and true and false things. He swears so often that he does not respect his oaths. When he swears by God, he does not perceive the enormity of God—mighty be His name; this is enough to make being a *swearer* a low trait.

'Mean' (*mahīn*) is from *m-h-n*, meaning "belittling" and "vulgar." Here, it is speaking of someone who is low-minded. Some say that it means "someone who often speaks ill" and others say it means "a liar."

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1 Translator's note: *Duhn* is oil or fat, so it is used figuratively to indicate softening to or cajoling someone, similar to how, in English, one says "to grease someone."

'Defamer' (*hammāz*) is the exaggerated form of *hamz* ("slandering"). It means that this type of person (keeps their eyes open) for faults and (their ears open) for slander. Some say that a *hammāz* is a person who slanders others through their gestures and glances. Others say that it means "a hardened gossip."

Going about with slander **(mashshā' bi-namīm)***: Namīm* is slander. *Mashshā'* is to spread tales from one people to another to ruin relations between them.

Forbidder of good (mannā' lil-khayr) refers to someone who often acts as an obstacle to good deeds, or who stops something good from reaching the deserving.

Outstepping the limits (mu'tadī) is from the verb form *al-i'tidā'* ("aggression," "wrongdoing") and means "crossing the limits into aggression or wrongdoing."

A 'sinful' (*athīm*) person is someone who has sinned so much that it has become part of parcel of him and he never stops. An *ithm* ("sin") is a wicked act which slows down what is good.

A person who is *ignoble* ('utul, with two *u*'s) has a crude, boorish temperament. Here, it refers to someone who is obscene, vile, rude, and hostile in his efforts to uphold falsehood. It can also be used for a glutton who keeps others away from his food, or someone who accosts people and imprisons or tortures them.

A *base-born* (zanīm) person has no known lineage. Some say that it refers to a bastard who claims to have been born from a group that he was not actually born from. Others say that it refers to a person who is known for being vile. Others say that it refers to someone who is so known for evil, that when evil is mentioned, this person rushes to mind. All these meanings resemble each other.

With these nine despicable traits, God describes the enemies of the religion who are urging the Prophet to obey and yield to them. They are the sum total of vices.

Ignoble, besides all that, base-born: Meaning, after all that has been said about these people's vile flaws, they are also base-born. Some exegetes deduce from this verse that these two traits (being *ignoble* and *base-born*) are the worst of their flaws.

This implies that it is unsuitable to obey someone with such horrid traits in the matter of truth. Even if one were to overlook those traits, he is still a crude, ill-natured bastard. The likes of him should not be obeyed in human society. Rather, he should be repulsed, neither obeyed in word nor copied in deed.

أَن كَانَ ذَا مَالٍ وَبَنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

(68:14) Because he possesses wealth and sons.

This clause appears to express causality (that is, it is as if contained the preposition *li-* and were a *lām ta'līl*, meaning "because"). Referring back to the verb, it describes the upshot of the sum total of these vile traits. That is, "he does this and that because he has wealth and children. This has made him arrogant, so he denies the blessings of God and acts wickedly instead of thanking God for His blessings and rectifying himself." The verse conveys censure and scorn, along the lines of: *Have you not considered him* (*Nimrod*) *who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because God had given him the kingdom?* (2:258)

Additional views:

Some exegetes say that the clause refers back to a previous verse (*And yield not...*, 68:10). They say that it means, "Do not obey him because he has wealth and children"; that is, "Do not obey him just because he has wealth and children." However, the meaning that we previously presented is broader and is closer to what comes to mind.

Some exegetes say that it cannot refer back to the verb *he said* in a subsequent conditional clause because grammarians say that what comes after a condition cannot act on something before it.

إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

(38:15) When Our communications are recited to him, he says: Stories (*asāṭīr*) of those of yore.

Asāṭīr is the plural of *usṭūrah*, which means "superstitious fable." The verse continues to explain "*yield not...*" (68:10).

سَنَسِمُهُ عَلَى الْخُرْطُومِ ﴿١٦﴾

(68:16) We will brand him on the nose (*sanasimuhu ʿalā al-khurṭūm*).

Wasm and *simah* mean "to mark." *Khurṭūm* means "nose." Some say that *khurṭūm* is used denotes an elephant's trunk or a pig's snout, so when it is used for this person's nose, it is sarcastic. The verse delivers a severe threat to the enemies of God, His Messenger, and the revelation.

"Branding on the nose" evidently means to be utterly humiliated in such a way that all will see, since the nose is prominent and conveys pride or humiliation, as in the expressions "he stuck his nose up in the air," "his nose burned (i.e. he was infuriated)"[1], "he rubbed his nose in the dirt," and "he lopped off his nose (i.e. he humiliated him)."

1 Translator's note: This is an unusual phrase in English, but is used in the Old Testament to describe anger.

إِنَّا بَلَوْنَاهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ إِذْ أَقْسَمُوا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَائِفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَأَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيمِ ﴿٢٠﴾

(68:17-20) Surely We will try them (*balawnā*) as We tried the owners of the garden, when they swore that they would certainly cut off the produce (*la-yaṣrimunnahā*) in the morning, and were not willing to set aside a portion (for the poor) (*wa lā yastathnūn*). Then there encompassed it a visitation from your Lord (*fa-ṭāfa… ṭā'if*) while they were sleeping. So it became as black, barren land (*ṣarīm*).

Balā' means "trials and afflictions." *Ṣurm* is "to pluck fruit from trees (or vines)." *Istithnā'* means "to separate and not treat the same as the rest." It also means to say "God willing" when affirming something since, when a person says "God willing," they are making an exception. For instance, if someone says, "I will leave tomorrow, if God wills," they mean, "I will leave tomorrow, unless God wills otherwise." *Ṭā'if* means "punishment which falls at night." A *ṣarīm* is a tree whose fruits have been plucked; some say it means "a dark night," and some say it means "a sand dune on which nothing grows, where there is no benefit to be found."

The seventeen verses, beginning with *Surely We will try them as We tried the owners of the garden…*, threaten the rejecters of the Prophet who accused him of madness. Like the owners of the garden, they were about to be punished. The punishment was already on its way, but they knew not; soon, they would find out. They were enamored with amassing wealth and children. Arrogantly, they relied on their assets and other material causes—whatever struck their fancy—instead of thanking their Lord for these blessings, traversing the path of truth, and worshipping their Lord. Either they would carry on like this until they reached the end of their lives, and then be shocked by the punishment in the hereafter; or they would be taken by surprise with punishment in this world, like during the Battle of Badr. They would see that there is no way out, and that their wealth and children are to no avail. These things will be useless to them, just as they were to the owners of the garden. They will regret what they did and plead to their Lord; however, that will not avert the chastisement of God, just like the inhabitants of the garden regretted and (blamed each other) and pleaded to their Lord, but it was of no help. *Such is the chastisement, and certainly the chastisement of the hereafter is greater, did they but know!* (68:33) This understanding depends on reading these verses alongside the prior verses, and assumes they were revealed together.

However, it is narrated that these verses were revealed about the year of drought that afflicted the people of Mecca and the Quraysh after the Prophet

prayed against them. He entreated, "O God! Be hard on the Muḍar tribe; give them years (of famine) like the years of Joseph!" In this understanding, "trial" (*balā'*) would refer to the drought. Their situation would resemble that of the owners of the garden,[1] except for the verse *Then some of them advanced against others, blaming each other* (68:30), which does not fit into the story of the people of Mecca.

In any case, *Surely We will try them as We tried the owners of the garden* means "We afflicted them with a trial, like We did to the owners of the garden." The *owners of the garden* (aṣḥāb al-jannah, 68:17) were a people in Yemen, and their garden was also in Yemen. Their story will be recounted in the section on narrations, God willing.

Further points about *Surely We will try them as We tried the owners of the garden, when they swore* (*idh aqsamū*) *that they would certainly cut off the produce* (la-yaṣrimunnahā) *in the morning* (muṣbiḥīn)*, and were not willing to set aside a portion* (*for the poor*) (wa lā yastathnūn) (68:17-18):

Idh ("when") is an adverb, describing *balawnā*.

Aqsamū means "they swore."

La-yaṣrimunnahā means "to cut" and "to pluck fruit from their garden."

Muṣbiḥīn means "in the morning."

It is as if they conferred by night and decided to pick the fruit the next morning. However, they either (a) did not say "God willing," but, rather, relied on material causes, or (b) did not set aside a share for the poor and destitute.[2]

Further points about *Then there encompassed it a visitation* (fa-ṭāfa ʿalayhā ṭā'if) *from your Lord* (min rabbika) *while they were sleeping, so it became as a black, barren land* (fa-aṣbaḥat kal-ṣarīm) (68:19-20):

Ṭā'if (translated as "visitation") means "an affliction circling them, surrounding them by night."

The preposition *min* ("from") here denotes from which direction something comes from.

When it says that their garden became like a *ṣarīm*, it means either that (a) their garden became like a tree whose fruit was cut off, (b) their garden turned black as night, charred by a fire which God sent upon it, or (c) their garden turned into a barren, useless sand-dune.

فَتَنَادَوا مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ أَنِ اغْدُوا عَلَىٰ حَرْثِكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَارِمِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَانطَلَقُوا وَهُمْ

1 Translator's note: Since, in both cases, their crops were destroyed.

2 Translator's note: As discussed above, *lā yastathnūn* can be interpreted both ways, although the English translation renders it as "not setting aside a portion for the poor."

يَتَخَافَتُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ أَن لَّا يَدْخُلَنَّهَا الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكُم مِّسْكِينٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَغَدَوْا عَلَىٰ حَرْدٍ قَادِرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

(68:21-25) And they called out to each other (*tanādaw*) in the morning (*muṣbiḥīn*), saying: Go early to your tilth (*ḥirthikum*) if you would cut (the produce) (*ṣārimīn*). So they went, while they consulted together secretly (*yatakhāfatūn*), saying: No poor man shall enter it today upon you. And in the morning they went, having the power to prevent (*ʿalā ḥirdin qādirīn*).

Tanādaw means "to call out to each other." *Muṣbiḥīn* means "when it became morning for them." *Ṣārimīn* is from *ṣurm* and means "to pluck the fruit from a tree." Here, in the verse, it means that they intended to pluck the fruit from their trees (not that they actually did that). *Ḥirth* means "crops and orchards." *Yatakhāfatūn* means "to hide." *Ḥird* means "to prevent." *Qādirīn* comes from *qadr* and means "capability."

It means:

Tanādaw—They called out to each other.

Muṣbiḥīn—They did this after morning came.

Go early to your tilth (an ighdū ʿalā ḥirthikum)—This explains what they called out to each other; that is, they shouted, "Go out early and pluck the fruit from your garden!" *Ighdū* is a command, meaning "go forth in the morning." According to *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, it inherently includes the meaning of "to turn towards" and hence takes an object with the preposition *ʿalā*; otherwise, it takes an object with the preposition *ilā*.

If you would cut (*the produce*) (in kuntum ṣārimīn)—If you have resolved to harvest the fruit.

So they went (fa-inṭalaqū)—They went to their garden.

While they consulted together secretly (wa hum yatakhāfatūn)—They went while secretly taking council.

Shall (*not*) *enter* (an lā yadkhulannahā)—Do not let anyone into the garden.

No poor man... today upon you (al-yawma ʿalaykum miskīn)—Meaning, they crept into the garden out of the sight of the poor so that none of the poor would follow them in and pressure them to allot them some of the harvest.

And in the morning (wa ghadaw)—When morning dawned over the garden.

To prevent (ʿalā ḥirdin)—Meaning, to keep out the poor.

Having the power (qādirīn)—While they had the inherent capability to harvest the fruit without giving any to the poor.[1]

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1 Editor's note: The author's commentary of verses 68:21-25 of the Qur'an, focuses on the actions and intentions of a group of people regarding their orchard. Overall, the commentary portrays the group's selfish motives and actions to exclude the

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَالُوا إِنَّا لَضَالُّونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

(68:26-27) But when they saw it, they said: Most surely we have gone astray. Nay! We are made to suffer privation.

When they saw their garden had been stripped bare, destroyed by God, they said, "We did wrong this morning when we wanted to harvest while keeping out the poor!"

Some exegetes say that *we have gone astray* means going the wrong way towards their garden and its fruit.

Nay! We are made to suffer privation: This statement parallels and escalates the previous verse. "Not only were we wrong, but we have now been deprived of our harvest!"

قَالَ أَوْسَطُهُمْ أَلَمْ أَقُل لَّكُمْ لَوْلَا تُسَبِّحُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

(68:28) The best of them said: Did I not say to you, Why do you not glorify (Allah)?

The best of them (awsaṭuhum)*:* The most moderately-tempered one, since he reminded them of what was right.[1] Some exegetes say that *awsaṭahum* means the one who was middlemost in age, but this view is incorrect.

Did I not say to you (a lam aqul lakum)*:* He had already told them that, but it was not mentioned previously in the story for the sake of brevity; instead, it suffices to mention it here.

Why do you not glorify (*God*) (law lā tusabbiḥūn)*?* Here, "glorifying God" means to absolve God of any partners, which they failed to do when they relied on themselves and material means. When they swore that they would harvest their fruit in the morning, but did not say "God willing," they did not acknowledge God as a cause or as having any effect. Rather, they saw only themselves and other material causes as pertaining to cause and effect. This is an assertion of *shirk* (assigning partners to God). Had they but said, "We shall harvest the fruit tomorrow, unless God wills," they would have denied that God has any partners, for if they had not harvested successfully, it would have been due to the will of God; and if they had harvested successfully, it would have been due to the permission of God, since God alone possesses the Divine Command, with no partner.

Some exegetes say that "glorifying God" means remembering God and repenting after intending to harvest while depriving the poor of the fruit. This

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needy from their orchard's bounty.

1 Translator's note: *Awsaṭ* literally means "middlemost."

view is worthy of consideration, if one understands *la yastathnūn* to mean "depriving the poor of their share of the fruit" (not "God willing").

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

(68:29) They said: Glory be to our Lord, surely we were unjust.

They said "*glory be to our Lord*" due to the censure from *the best of them*. That is, when they were swearing to harvest the fruit, they were associating partners with God, but now they are disassociating partners from God. "He is our Lord who manages our affairs through His will. We were wrong when we asserted partners to Him." This is *tasbīḥ* ("glorification") and their confession of how they wronged themselves when they associated partners with God.

Another view is that this means that they repented and confessed that they wronged themselves and the poor.

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَلاوَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

(68:30) Then some of them advanced against others, blaming each other.

They were blaming each other for what they had done wrong.

قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا طَاغِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ عَسَى رَبُّنَا أَن يُبْدِلَنَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا رَاغِبُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

(68:31-32) Said they: O woe to us! surely we were inordinate: maybe, our Lord will give us instead one better than it; surely to our Lord do we make our humble petition.

Ṭughyān means "to cross the limits." The pronoun *-hā* in *minhā* grammatically refers to the garden, although it is speaking about the garden's fruit. It means: They said, 'Alas! We crossed the limits of servitude towards God when we affirmed partners to our Lord and did not acknowledge His unity! We hope that our Lord will replace our garden, which was destroyed by an affliction from God, with something better, for we have besought Him, turning away from everything else."

كَذَلِكَ الْعَذَابُ وَلَعَذَابُ الآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

(68:33) Such is the chastisement, and certainly the chastisement of the hereafter is greater, did they but know!

The subject and predicate of the sentence are flipped; *chastisement* is the subject, and '*such is*' is the predicate. It means that "the punishment will be similar to that which befell the owners of the garden." That is, a person is tried with

wealth and children. Deluded and arrogant, he crosses the line. Seeing himself as independent, he forgets his Lord and treats material causes and effect, and himself, as partners with God. He commits evil, heedless of the ill consequences of his deeds which flutter about him, readying him for the punishment. This goes on, until the punishment takes him by surprise, showing its most horrendous face. Awakened from his heedlessness, he remembers what he had been advised before, and regrets his wrongdoing and transgression. Like the owners of the garden, he begs God to restore His blessings upon him, so that he might thank Him for them. The story of the owners of the garden, therefore, is a general pattern which is often followed.

And certainly the chastisement of the hereafter is greater, did they but know!: This is because it emanates from divine power, leaving nothing standing and no hope of escape, not even through death or annihilation, just as when the tribulations of this world surround a person from all sides. Unlike worldly calamities and chastisement, it is eternal, unending.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Maʿānī* (*al-Akhbār*), via a chain of narration from Sufyān ibn Saʿīd al-Thawrī, on the exegesis of the disjointed letters in the Qur'an, it is related:

Imām al-Ṣādiq said, "*Nūn* is a river (*nahr*) in the garden. God, the Mighty and Glorious, said, 'Freeze!' So it froze and became ink. Then He told the pen, 'Write!' So it wrote line-by-line all that had been and all that would be, until the day of resurrection, upon the guarded tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*). The ink is an ink of light, and the pen is a pen of light, and the tablet is a tablet of light."

I (Sufyān al-Thawrī) said to him, "O son of the Messenger of God! Explain the tablet, the pen, and the ink—a deep explanation. Teach me what God has taught you!"

He (Imām al-Ṣādiq) said, "O Ibn Saʿīd! Were you not among those befitting a response, I would not have replied. The *nūn* is an angel which reports to the pen, which is an angel that reports to the tablet, which is an angel that reports to Isrāfīl, who reports to Michael, who reports to Gabriel, who reports to the prophets and messengers."

Then he said, "Get up, O Sufyān, for I will not entrust you (with more)."

(2) In *al-Maʿānī* (*al-Akhbār*), it is related via its chain of narration from Ibrāhīm al-Karkhī:

I (Ibrāhīm al-Karkhī) asked Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad (Imām al-Ṣādiq) about the tablet and pen.

He said, "They are both angels."

(3) In *al-Maʿānī* (*al-Akhbār*), it is related via a chain of narration from al-Aṣbagh ibn Nabātah from the Commander of the Faithful (Imām ʿAlī):
Nūn. I swear by the pen and what they write: The pen is a pen of light, and writing is of light, upon the guarded tablet, *witnessed by those brought near* (*al-muqarrabūn*, 83:21)—and *God suffices as a witness* (17:96).

Author's comment: *Maʿānī* (*al-Akhbār*) has other (similar) Shīʿī narrations. At the end of the exegesis of 45:29 (*This is Our book that speaks against you with justice; surely We wrote what you did*), we included al-Qummī's narration from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Qaṣīr from Imām al-Ṣādiq about the tablet and pen, which includes the following: "Then he sealed the mouth of the pen. It did not speak after that, will never speak again; it is the hidden book in which all has been transcribed."

(4) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Jarīr relates from Muʿāwiyah ibn Qurrah that his father said that the Messenger of God said:
Nūn. I swear by the pen and what they write (68:1): The tablet is of light, and the pen is of light, putting into effect what will happen until the day of resurrection.

Author's comment: There are other narrations of this ilk. "Putting into effect what will happen" applies to the things will come to pass exactly as they have been written there. There is a similar narration from Abū Hurayrah, in which he says, "Then the pen was sealed, and it did not speak again, and will not speak until the day of resurrection."

(5) In *Maʿānī* (*al-Akhbār*), it is related via a chain of narration from Abū Jārūd that Imām al-Bāqir said regarding *And most surely you conform* (*yourself*) *to sublime morality* (68:4): This is Islam.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is related from Abū al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqir regarding *And most surely you conform* (*yourself*) *to sublime morality* (68:4): On a great religion (*dīn*).

Author's comment: He means that Islam includes all forms of moral perfection, which the Prophet embodied in his life. A well-known narration from the Prophet says, "I was appointed (as a prophet) to perfect top-notch morals."

(7) In *Majmaʿ* (*al-Bayān*), it said via a chain of narration from al-Ḥākim, from a chain of narration from al-Ḍaḥḥāk:
When the Quraysh saw the Prophet putting ʿAlī forward and treating him as important, they maligned ʿAlī, saying, "Muḥammad is being tested by him!"

So God revealed: *Nūn. I swear by the pen and what they write* (68:1). This is an oath which God swears.

By the grace of your Lord you are not mad. And most surely you shall have a reward never to be cut off. And most surely you conform (*yourself*) *to sublime morality.* (68:2-4) Meaning the Qur'an.

...Surely your Lord best knows him who errs from His way (68:7)—This is the group who said what they said (about ʿAlī).

And He best knows the followers of the right course (68:7)—meaning ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

Author's comment: Something similar is narrated in *Tafsīr al-Burhān* from Muḥammad ibn al-ʿAbbās, via a chain of narration from al-Ḍaḥḥāk; at the end, it says, "And *the right course* (68:7) is ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib."

(8) In *Majmaʿ* (*al-Bayān*), it says regarding: *And yield not to any mean swearer* (68:10):

It is said that this refers to al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah. He offered to pay the Prophet to renege on his religion.

It is also said that this refers to al-Akhnas ibn Sharīq. This is related from ʿAṭā.'

It is also said that this refers to al-Aswad ibn ʿAbd Yaghūth. This is related from Mujāhid.

Author's comment: There are other narrations about this in *Al-Durr al-manthūr* and elsewhere. We have left them out here, but whoever wishes to consider them can consult the comprehensive compilations of narrations.

(9) In *Majmaʿ* (*al-Bayān*), it is related that Shaddād ibn Aws said:

The Messenger of God said, "A *jawwāẓ*, a *jaʿẓarī*, and an *ʿutul zanīm* shall never enter the garden."

I said, "What is a *jawwāẓ*?"

He said, "Libertines."

I said, "What is a *jaʿẓarī*?"

He said, "The crude and boorish."

I said, "What is a *ʿutul zanīm*?"

He said, "Paunchy, rude, gluttonous, despotic, wrongdoing drunkards."

(10) In the same source, regarding the meaning of *zanīm*, it says that it means "those who have no (known) lineage."

(11) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says regarding *Ignoble* (ʿutul)*, besides all that, base-born* (zanīm) (68:13):

ʿUtul means to be extremely blasphemous, and *zanīm* means to be illegitimate.

(12) In the same source, it is related from Abū al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqir

regarding *Surely We will try them as We tried the owners of the garden* (68:17):

The people of Mecca were afflicted with hunger, just like the owners of the garden. Their garden was in this world, in Yemen, in a place called "al-Riḍwān," nine miles from Ṣanʿā'.

(13) In the same source, it is related via a chain of narration from Ibn ʿAbbās: Someone said to him (Ibn ʿAbbās), "A group of Muslims hold that the servant (of God) who sins will be denied sustenance (from God)." Ibn ʿAbbās said, "By God—whom there is no god but He! In the book of God, this is elucidated more clearly than the shining sun. God discusses it in the chapter '*Nūn* and the Pen' (Sūrah al-Qalam).

"There was an old man who had a garden. He never used to bring its produce home to his family until he had given a share to the deserving. After he died, his five sons inherited his garden. The year their father died, their garden bore fruit as never before. After the afternoon prayers, the young men went to their garden and found abundant fruit and sustenance, the likes of which they had never seen when their father was alive. When they saw the bounty, they became greedy, and told each other, 'Our father was an old man who had gone senile. Let's agree not to give anything to the poor Muslims this year, so we can get rich. Then, we will continue doing what was done before.'

"Four of them agreed, but one of them objected. He is the one whom God speaks of when He says: *The best of them said: Did I not say to you, Why do you not glorify* (*Allah*)*?* (68:28)"

The man said, "O Ibn ʿAbbās! Was he the middlemost (*awsaṭuhum*) in age?"

He (Ibn ʿAbbās) said, "No, he was the youngest but he had the greatest intellect, and he was the most moderate (*awsaṭ*) and the best of his people. Evidence for that is found in the Qur'anic verse which says that 'you, the community of Muḥammad, are the youngest of nations and best of nations'. God says: *And thus We have made you a medium* (*just*) (awsaṭ) *nation* (2:143).

"The best of them said, 'Fear God, and do as your father did; you will be safe and profit.' However, they attacked him, hitting him violently. When he realized that they intended to kill him, he went along with their plan—unwillingly, not obediently.

"They went home, then swore by God that they would harvest the produce the next morning. However, they did not say 'God willing'. So God afflicted them on account of their sin, and they were separated

from the sustenance (*rizq*) which they almost had. God spoke of them in the Book when He said: *Surely We will try them as We tried the owners of the garden, when they swore that they would certainly cut off the produce in the morning, and were not willing to set aside a portion* (*for the poor*). *Then there encompassed it a visitation from your Lord while they were sleeping. So it became as black, barren land* (ṣarīm) (*68:17-20*). That is, it was as if it had been burnt.

The man said, "O Ibn ʿAbbās! What does *ṣarīm* mean?"

He said, "A dark night." Then he said, "Nothing shines in it; there is no light."

(Ibn ʿAbbās continued,) "When morning came, *they called out to each other in the morning, saying: Go early to your tilth if you would cut* (*the produce*). *So they went, while they consulted together secretly* (yatakhāfatūn) (68:21-13)."

The man asked, "O Ibn ʿAbbās, what does *yatakhāfatūn* mean?"

He said, "(It means) they were secretly conferring so that no one else could hear them. They were saying, '*No poor man shall enter it today upon you.' And in the morning they went, having the power to prevent* (68:24-25). They were planning to harvest the produce without anyone else knowing, and so divine wrath and vengeance befell them.

"*But when they saw it*—they saw what had befallen them—*they said: 'Most surely we have gone astray. Nay! We are made to suffer privation'* (68:26-27). God had deprived them of that sustenance due to their sin, but was not unjust to them in any way.

"*The best of them said: Did I not say to you, Why do you not glorify* (*Allah*)*? They said: Glory be to our Lord, surely we were unjust. Then some of them advanced against others, blaming each other* (68:28-30). They blamed themselves for what they had decided. *Said they: 'O woe to us! surely we were inordinate: maybe, our Lord will give us instead one better than it; surely to our Lord do we make our humble petition'* (68:31-32). So God said: *Such is the chastisement, and certainly the chastisement of the hereafter is greater, did they but know* (68:33)."

Author's comment: There are other narrations which say similar things to this and the preceding narrations. Other narrations say that the garden belonged to a man of the Banū Isrāʾīl. When he died, his sons inherited his garden, and events unfolded as they did.

Verses 34-52

This section includes the tail end of the threat delivered those who denied the Prophet in the preceding verses. Chastisement has been decreed for them in the hereafter, whereas the reverent shall be in blissful gardens. It unilaterally establishes that the reverent and the rejectors are not equal. Therefore, the rejectors cannot hope to be received generously by God while they are guilty. The blessings they find in this world take them step by step to perdition, giving them time to dig their hole deeper.

In these verses, there is an emphasis on the command to the Prophet to be patient over the decree of his Lord.

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٣٤﴾

(68:34) Surely those who guard (against evil) shall have with their Lord (*ʿinda rabbihim*) gardens of bliss (*jannāt-i naʿīm*).

Herein lie glad tidings, and an explication of the situation of the reverent in the hereafter vis-à-vis the situation of the rejectors.

By saying *with their Lord* (ʿinda rabbihim) rather than "before God (*ʿinda Allāh*)," it expresses a bond between God and the reverent, centring on divine mercy and the divine administration of their affairs. They have that since they confined lordship to Him and worshipped Him sincerely.

***Gardens of bliss* (jannāt-i naʿim—naʿīm meaning niʿmah or "blessing"):** *Of bliss*[1] indicates that the joys found in these gardens are untainted by punishment or pain. God willing, it will be explained in the exegesis of 102:8 (*Then on that day you shall most certainly be questioned about the boons* [naʿīm]) that *naʿīm* means allegiance (to the Prophet and his family, *wilāyah*).

أَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

(68:35) What! Shall We then make (that is, treat) those who submit (*al-muslimīn*) as the guilty?

At first glance, this verse seems to offer a rational argument for the necessity of the resurrection, similar to: *Shall We treat those who believe and do good like the mischief-makers in the earth? Or shall We make those who guard* (*against evil*) *like the wicked?* (38:28) (This verse has been explained previously.)

It also seems like it could be a refutation of the claim (advanced by the rich and influential opponents of the Prophet) that even if they were to be

1 Translator's note: That is, the addition of bliss to garden via the *iḍāfah* grammatical construction.

resurrected, they would be well-off, because that is how they were when they were alive. God relates there claim in: *And I do not think the hour will come to pass, and if I am sent back to my Lord, I shall have with Him sure good* (41:50).

A second possibility: Read alongside the succeeding verses, it refutes their claim that they will be equal to the reverent (in the hereafter). It is narrated that when the polytheists heard about the resurrection, they said, "If what Muḥammad and those who have believed alongside him say is true, we will be better off than them, just as it was in this life—or, at least, we will be equal."

However, even if the verse were situated in the context of refuting their claim (that they would be better off than, or equal to, the believers in the hereafter, since that was their situation in this world), the verse would have said "shall We make the guilty like those who submit?" rather than the reverse.

A resolution: After pondering on the context, it becomes clear that, while the verse does reject the notion that the guilty are equal to those who submit, this is not only because their crimes sway the balance. Rather, it additionally demonstrates the honor that those who submit enjoy before God; this makes it impossible for those who submit to be equal to the guilty. It is as if it is saying: "You, the guilty, claim that you are equal to us, who submit. Your claim is wrong. This is because God would never be satisfied with making those who submit like to the guilty because of the honor that those who submit enjoy before God. And you are the guilty ones!"

Therefore, the verse proves that the two sides are unequal in the sense that those who submit enjoy honor before God (that the guilty lack). However, it does not assert that divine justice will differ between the guilty and those who will submit; it is not that type of inequity.

'Submission' (*islām*) means to submit to the command of God, only following His will, both in performing deeds and in refraining from committing crimes which oppose the divine command. That would be heinous, and is the antonym of "submission."

A breakdown of the arguments underlying the rhetorical questions in verses 68:35-68:47, prior to the exegesis of these verses:

This verse and the next ones (up until *or have they* (*the knowledge of*) *the unseen, so that they write* (*it*) *down?*, 68:47) refute the claim that the guilty will enjoy the same situation as those who submit on the day of resurrection. Through rhetorical questions, these verses explore various facets of that claim to refute it.

The verses establish the following argument: If, on the day of resurrection, the guilty enjoy the same situation as those who submit then, in their reckoning,

this would either be from God—a gift or a mercy or from Him—or would not be from God.

If it is from God:

First possibility: If they argue this, they could only argue it rationally, since no existing scripture supports it. However, rational evidence does not support this. As God says: *What has happened to you? How do you judge?* (68:36)

Second possibility: Possibly, this could have been argued on the basis of some sort of scripture. However, they do not have any scripture. God says: *Or have you a book...* (68:37).

Third possibility: Or, they are advancing their claim neither on the basis of reason nor on the basis of scripture. Rather, God verbally promised to make both sides equal. However, this cannot be the case. (For instance, they are not prophets who can receive divine revelation.)

These are three possibilities.

If it is not from God: If they are seriously asserting this, there are three possibilities:

Fourth possibility: If they are seriously asserting this, they must have the ability to grant themselves an equal status to those who submit on the day of judgment, even against God's will. This is clearly not the case. God says: *Ask them which of them will vouch for that* (68:40). (That is, which of them will seriously say that they rule over what happens on the day of judgment?)

Fifth possibility: Or do they have partners who can do that for them? God says: *Or have they associates? Let them bring their associates if they are truthful* (68:41). (Obviously, they do not.)

Sixth possibility: If they really could do this, then they could control the unseen and the future; people's fates would unfold according to their decree. Since everything was vested in their will, they could deem themselves equal to those who submit on the day of judgment. However, this is not the case; they cannot control the unseen realms. This refuted in: *Or have they* (*the knowledge of*) *the unseen, so that they write* (*it*) *down?* (68:47)

These are three more possibilities.

Seventh possibility: Or, maybe they are not serious when they say this; maybe they are just trying to brush off the Prophet and get out of following him because they think the Prophet will charge them for his services as a messenger and guide. Then, they would be burdened with a fee. However, this is not the case. God responds to this by saying: *Or do you ask from them a reward, so that they are burdened with debt?* (68:46)

This now totals seven possibilities.

This is what can be understood from pondering on why these verses have

been arranged repetitively (in the sense of "or this? or that? or maybe that?"). Other things have been said about the arrangement of these verses; whoever wants to read further about that can consult the voluminous exegeses.

مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

(68:36) What has happened to you? How do you judge?

This expresses amazement at their claim that the guilty will be equal to those who submit on the day of resurrection. It indicates that a sound mind would balk at the idea that those two would be equal; therefore, this idea can be rejected on the grounds of rational proof. It means: What kind of delusion or confusion has beset you, in order to lead you to that conclusion?

أَمْ لَكُمْ كِتَابٌ فِيهِ تَدْرُسُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ إِنَّ لَكُمْ فِيهِ لَمَا تَخَيَّرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

(68:37-38) Or have you a book (*kitāb*) wherein you read (*tadrusūn*), that you have surely therein what you choose (*takhayyarūn*)?

This indicates that they cannot support their claim (that the guilty and those who submit will be equal on the day of judgment) through revelation, just as the previous verse indicated that they could not support their claim through rational argumentation.

'Book' (*kitāb*) here refers to a divinely revealed scripture, which would act as proof. *Tadrusūn* means "reading it." *Takhayyarūn* means "having a choice."

That you have surely therein what you choose?: This acts as an object of the verb 'read' (*tadrusūn*). It is a rhetorical question.

It means: Do you have a scripture from God saying you can have whatever you want in the hereafter—or at any other time? Did you read that in your book, then choose heavenly bliss?

أَمْ لَكُمْ أَيْمَانٌ عَلَيْنَا بَالِغَةٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ لَكُمْ لَمَا تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

(68:39) Or have you received from Us an agreement (*aymān*) confirmed by an oath extending (*bāligbah*) to the day of resurrection that you shall surely have what you demand?

This denies that they have a verbal covenant with God.

Aymān is the plural of *yamīn*, which means "oath" (*qasam*). *Bulūgh* means "extending until it reaches fruition." An *oath extending*, therefore, would be unquestionably fulfilled. *Until the day of resurrection* is an adverbial phrase, describing something elided, along the lines of: *Do you have an incontrovertible oath from Us that will exist until the day of resurrection?*

The clause, *Until the day of resurrection* can also be understood to be

describing *extending*, in which case it would refer to the oath extending timewise until the day of resurrection.

Some exegetes say that *aymān* refers to pacts and covenants (*ʿuhūd* and *mawāthīq*). In this case, it would be a figure of speech whereby one thing necessitates another.

Possibly it could also be a construction in which the singular is used to express an entire category.

The phrase, *That you shall surely have what you demand?* is the response to the supposed oath. It is a rhetorical question. It means: Rather, do you believe there are covenants with Us, in which We have sworn definitive oaths lasting until the Day of Resurrection, as if We have conceded to you the right to decide whatever you wish?[1]

سَلْهُم أَيُّهُم بِذَلِكَ زَعِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

(68:40) Ask them which of them will vouch (*zaʿīm*) for that,

Although this continues to challenge their claim, it is addressed to the Prophet since they have devolved to the point where they are no longer worthy of a direct response. Therefore, the remaining four points are conveyed in the third person. The first is, *ask them which of them will vouch for that*. A *zaʿīm* is someone who oversees a matter. It is a rhetorical question.

It means: Ask the polytheists which of them will take responsibility for making them and those who submit to God equal on the day of judgment? Since it has already been established that there is no evidence that God will do this, will any of them take care of it? Who exactly will be doing this? Clearly, anyone who uttered such a fallacy would have to be out of their mind.

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاء فَلْيَأْتُوا بِشُرَكَائِهِمْ إِن كَانُوا صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

(68:41) Or have they associates? Let them bring their associates if they are truthful.

Possibly, they could be claiming that they have partners to God—demigods—who can intercede with God for them on the day of judgment and make them equal to those who submit. (Exalted be God above having any partners!) This rhetorical question refutes that claim; that is, they do not have any partners.

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1 Editor's note: The gist of the author's explanation is as follows: The verse rejects the notion of a verbal oath ('*aymān*') with God extending to the Day of Resurrection. It questions the absurdity of claiming such an eternal covenant with God that would grant any demand, using '*aymān*' to possibly imply broader pacts or covenants.

Let them bring their associates...: This is a rhetorical device asserting that they have no partners. It emphasizes the first part of the verse—*or do they have associates?*—which also negates that they have any partners.

Further interpretations of 'associates':

Some exegetes say that *associates* means "people who say the same thing." In this case, it would mean: Do you have any partners who share your belief? Let them bring them, if they are truthful. However, you can tell that this interpretation would not conclusively end the argument.

Some exegetes say that *associates* means "witnesses." In this case, it would mean: Do they have any witnesses to what they say? Let them bring them, if they are truthful. However, there is no textual evidence to support this interpretation. Nevertheless, this could be rectified by saying that those witnesses would be the witnesses over a Book before God, or witnesses to an oath between them and God. Both possibilities have already been refuted.[1]

Some exegetes say that *associates* means "those who share authority with God." "Bring them" would mean "bring them on the day of resurrection to bear witness or intercede before God." You can tell that this meaning also would not end the argument.

يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَن سَاقٍ وَيُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ فَلا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ خَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ وَقَدْ كَانُوا يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ وَهُمْ سَالِمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

(68:42-43) On the day when there shall be a severe affliction (*yukshafu 'an sāq*), and they shall be called upon to make obeisance, but they shall not be able, their looks cast down, abasement shall overtake them; and they were called upon to make obeisance indeed while yet they were safe.

Day is an adverb describing something elided, such as "keep in mind the day." *Yukshafu 'an sāq* (lit. "the shank is laid bare") is a metaphor for severe difficulties. The image is that of a person rolling up their clothes to bare their legs (to move faster) in the face of fight or flight.[2] *Al-Kashshāf* says:

> *Yamwa yukshafu 'an sāq* speaks of a heavy day which only grows worse, not of clothes and legs. It is similar to when you say about a

1 Translator's note: That is, the preceding verses asserted that they neither have a scripture nor a special covenant with God.

2 Translator's note: Some Muslims take this verse literally to mean that, on the Day of Judgment, God will unclothe his leg. 'Allāmah refutes this view in the section on narrations on the grounds that God has no body parts.

miser who has lost his hand, "His hand is in chains." There are no hands and no chains. Rather, it is just a metaphor for stinginess.

This and the next five verses are a parenthetical discussion in the middle of the discussion of their partners, whom they swore would bring them felicity if there were any kind of resurrection or accounting, and God reminds them that they have no partners or intercessors. Rather, the human being earns his own happiness in the hereafter through prostration—that is, humility—towards God, acknowledging Him alone as Lord in this world, until he acquires the trait of humility, which thereby brings him happiness on the day of resurrection.

Since these guilty rejectors did not prostrate to God in this world, they will be unable to do so in the hereafter. They will not be happy, and will not be equal to those who submit in any way. Rather, since they were too arrogant to prostrate to God in this world, God let them descend into perdition, step by step, until they sunk into utter wretchedness, passing into the painful torment in the hereafter.

On the day when there shall be a severe affliction (yukshafu ʿan sāq)***, and they shall be called upon to make obeisance:*** This means: Recollect that severe day when they will be called to prostrate humbly to God but will be unable, since they have firmly cultivated the trait of arrogance inside themselves—and, on that day, all that is hidden shall be laid bare.

Their looks cast down, abasement shall overtake them: These two phrases (*ḥāl*) are subjects of the passive verb *they shall be called upon* (yadʿūn), meaning that they shall be called upon while their eyes are lowered and humiliation descends upon them. *Cast down* is used to describe *eyes* since humiliation can be seen in the eyes.

And they were called upon to make obeisance indeed while yet they were safe: 'While yet they were safe' means either that they were secure from the travails that overtook them due to their arrogance towards the Truth, which stripped them of the ability to respond to the Truth; or that they were absolutely able to have made obedience while in this world. It means: In this world, they were called to prostrate to God, while they were safe and sound, fully able to do so, but they did not respond to that call.

Some exegetes say 'obedience' (*sujūd*) means "the ritual prayer" (*ṣalāt*), but this view is unsubstantiated, as you can see.

فَذَرْنِي وَمَن يُكَذِّبُ بِهَٰذَا الْحَدِيثِ سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُم مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

(68:44) So leave Me and him who rejects this announcement (*ḥadīth*);
We will overtake them by degrees, from whence they perceive not:

'Announcement' (*ḥadīth*) here means the Qur'an. When God says, "*Leave*

Me and him who rejects...," it is a way of saying that He will take care of them on His own; He will not leave them alone. It is a way of consoling the Prophet and warning the polytheists.

We will overtake them by degrees, from whence they perceive not: This resumes the explanation of how God shall seize and torment them. This can be understood from *Leave me...*

Istidrāj means to let them descend, step by step, until they wallow in the pit of wretchedness and destruction. God gave them blessing after blessing, but whenever they received something new, they became preoccupied with it and forgot to be grateful. They became more and more heedless, further and further from remembering God.

Therefore, *istidrāj* is when blessings are continually bestowed on people to destroy them, but they cannot see that, since they rejoice at what they perceive as good, rather than recognizing these gifts as destructive and evil.

وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ ﴿٤٥﴾

(68:45) And I do bear with (*amlī*) them, surely My plan (*kaydī*) is firm (*matīn*).

Imlā' means "to delay" or "to respite" (*imhāl*), and *kayḍ* is a type of plot or stratagem. *Matīn* means "strong."

It means: Give them time, so they can make space for Our gifts through their wrongdoing, as they please; My scheme is firm.

The shift in person from *We will overtake them* to first-person singular (*I do bear with them*) to third-person (*Do you ask from them a reward?*) conveys grandeur and might. There are those responsible for those pouring down those blessings, drip by drip. Then, the shift in person in *I do bear with them*, it reflects that "bearing with them" means "extending their lifespans." And, in the Qur'an, only God determines lifespans, no one else: *Then He decreed a term; and there is a term named with Him* (6:2).

أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ أَجْرًا فَهُم مِّن مَّغْرَمٍ مُّثْقَلُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

(68:46) Or (*am*) do you ask from them a reward, so that they are burdened with debt (*maghramin muthqalūn*)?

Maghram comes from the word meaning "fee" or "debt," and *ithqāl* means "to bear a burden." This sentence is connected to *or have they associates* (68:41) though the conjunction *am* (or).

It means: Or are you asking those criminals—who thought that the guilty and those who submit would be equal on the day of resurrection—to pay you for being a prophet? Are telling you this to wriggle out of paying, and not

because they really mean it?

أَمْ عِندَهُمُ الْغَيْبُ فَهُمْ يَكْتُبُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

(68:47) Or have they (the knowledge of) the unseen, so that they write (it) down?

Here, the context indicates that the *unseen* refers to the divine mechanisms of destiny and the decree, which are enacted on the world's stage. *Writing* means "destining" and "decreeing." Therefore, "having the unseen" means "having control over destiny."

It means: Do they hold the divine decree and destiny in their hands? Do they decree ("write") for themselves whatever they want, and so will they decree that they and those who submit shall be equal?

Some exegetes say that *unseen* here just means that they know something special that other people do not know, and that *writing* just means "writing it down in the normal fashion." In this case, it would mean: Is their claim based on some special knowledge which they alone have, which they have written down and passed on, and which it befits them to share? However, this view is farfetched and should not be pursued; the other possibilities which we have mentioned eliminate it.

This particular remonstration is mentioned last—even after *do you ask from them a reward*—even though it seems as if it should have been mentioned earlier—because it is the weakest argument they could produce.

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلا تَكُن كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَى وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ ﴿٤٨﴾

(68:48) So wait patiently for the judgment of your Lord, and be not like the companion of the fish, when he cried while he was in distress (*makẓūm*).

The *companion of the fish* was the prophet Jonah. *Makzūm* comes from *kāẓim al-ghayẓ*, meaning "swallowing anger." It speaks of someone who is choked with sorrow and can find no way to heal his anger. Therefore, God tells the Prophet—who, when invoking God, was full of anguish—not to be like Jonah . That is, God is preventing the cause of this type of suffering, such as tightened circumstances or hastened torment.

It means: Patiently await the meeting with your Lord. Let them take their own steps into perdition. Give them time. Do not hasten punishment for these rejectors. Do not be like Jonah, who was filled with agony or anger when he implored God, praising Him and confessing to his wrongdoing. Rather, wait, and avoid being tried with what he was tried with. What Jonah said in the belly of the whale (or fish) is mentioned here: *There is no god but Thou, glory be to*

Thee; surely I am of those who make themselves to suffer loss (21:87), as is mentioned in Sūrah al-Anbiyā'.

Some exegetes say that the preposition *li-* in *li-ḥukmi rabbika* means *ilā* ("towards"). In this case, it would warn his people that God shall judge between him and them. However, the previous view fits the context of the preceding verses better.

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لَوْلا أَن تَدَارَكَهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَاء وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

(68:49) Were it not that favor (*ni'mah*) from his Lord had overtaken him (*tadārakahu*), he would certainly have been cast down (*nubidha*) upon the naked ground (*'arā'*) while he was blamed (*madhmūm*).

This explains the reason behind the prohibition delivered to the Prophet in the previous verse (*be not like the companion of the fish*, 68:48). *Tadāruk* means "reaching." *Favor* (ni'mah) has been explained here to mean "accepted repentance." *Nubidha* means "to cast forth." *'Arā'* is open ground, unsheltered by a roof or vegetation. *Madhmūm* is the opposite of "praised."

It means: Had not his Lord blessed him through accepting his repentance, he would have been cast out onto the open ground, blamed for what he had done.

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Reasons why verse 68:49 does not contradict 37:143-144.

One should not say that verse 68:49 contradicts these verses in Sūrah al-Ṣaffāt: *But had it not been that he was of those who glorify* (*Us*)*, He would certainly have tarried in its belly to the day when they are raised* (37:143-144).

These verses lend the sense that his deeds required that he stay in the belly of the whale until the day of resurrection, whereas verse 68:49 says that he would have been cast out onto barren ground, blamed. Therefore, these may seem like two conflicting possibilities.

However, that is not the case, since these two verses are speaking about different things, each of which has a different outcome. The verses in Sūrah al-Ṣaffāt (37:143-144) says that he would have perpetually remained glorifying God for the rest of his life in the face of his trial; that is reflected in *he was of those who glorify*. Were it not for that, he would have tarried in the belly of the whale until the day of resurrection. This verse which is currently under discussion is speaking of the blessing of an accepted repentance; since his repentance was accepted while he was in the belly of the whale, blessings surrounded him, and so he was not cast out onto the shore, blamed.

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Taking these verses together, they indicate that he left angrily, which would have resulted in him lingering in the belly of the whale until the day of

resurrection. However, this was offset due to his perpetual glorification of God, then and afterwards. Therefore, God decreed that he should be ejected out onto the shore. This means that the natural consequence of his actions should have been ejection and blame. However, divine grace intervened, leading to a different outcome. As a result, the whale released him, and he was not subjected to blame. Instead, God chose him and counted him among the righteous. Thus, there is no contradiction between these verses.

Previously, in this work, we established that the true *niʿmah* ("blessing") is *wilāyah* (loyalty to God or the Prophet and his family). With this in mind, one can look at *were it not that favor* (niʿmah) *from his Lord had overtaken him* and understand a different meaning from it.

فَاجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَجَعَلَهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

(68:50) Then his Lord chose him, and He made him of the good.

The meanings of *ijtibāʾ* ("choosing") and *ṣalāḥ* ("goodness," "righteousness") have been explained previously.

وَإِن يَكَادُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَيُزْلِقُونَكَ بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ وَيَقُولُونَ إِنَّهُ لَمَجْنُونٌ ﴿٥١﴾ وَمَا هُوَ إِلاَّ ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

(68:51-52) And those who disbelieve (*wa in yakādu*) would almost smite you (*yuzliqūnaka*) with their eyes when they hear the reminder, and they say: Most surely he is mad. And it is naught but a reminder to the nations.

The particle *in* is the lighter form of *inna* (often translated as "verily," "indeed"). *Zalq* (the general root form of *yuzliqūn*) means "slipperiness," whereas *izlāq* (from which the verb *yuzliqūn* comes) means "to fell." It is a figurative way of saying "killing or destroying."

It means: It is as if those who disbelieve are ready to strike you down with their eyes when they hear the Reminder.

Exegetes overwhelmingly say that "smiting with the eyes" means "striking someone with the evil eye." The evil eye is a psychic capacity; rational argumentation cannot prove that it does not exist.[1] Possibly, some people have seen some things that lend credence to it. It is described in narrations, and so there is no reason to deny it.

Some exegetes say that it means that they glare at you so hatefully and

1 Translator's note: Keep in mind that ʿAllāmah was writing in a time when a secular worldview was dominant among some intellectual circles, and certain beliefs were treated as old-fashioned or superstitious.

vehemently when they hear you reciting the Remembrance (the Qur'an), that it is as if they are about to kill you with the sharpness of their eyes.

And they say: Most surely he is mad** (**or possessed**). **And it is naught but a reminder to the nations: Their accusation is that the Qur'an was inspired by devils (not God); this is shown by the fact that they accuse the Prophet of being possessed while he is reciting the Qur'an. Therefore, the Qur'an refutes their accusation by saying that the Qur'an is nothing but a *reminder to the nations*.

And they say: Most surely he is mad: At the beginning of the chapter, God refuted their claim—*most surely he* (*the Prophet*) *is mad*—by saying *by the grace of your Lord you are not mad* (68:2). Thus, the chapter closes as it opened.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Maʿānī* (*al-Akhbār*), it is related via a chain of narration from al-Ḥusayn ibn Saʿīd from Abū al-Ḥasan (Imām al-Riḍā) regarding *On the day when there shall be a severe affliction, and they shall be called upon to make obeisance* (68:42):
A veil of light shall be removed, and the faithful shall fall in obeisance, while the backbones of the hypocrites shall stiffen, and they will be unable to fall prostrate.

(2) In the same source, via a chain of narration from ʿUbayd ibn Zurārah, it is related from Imām al-Ṣādiq:
I (ʿUbayd ibn Zurārah) asked him (Imām al-Ṣādiq) about (the meaning of *yukshafu ʿan sāq*) in *On the day when there shall be a severe affliction* (*or His shank shall be bared*) (yukshafu ʿan sāq), *and they shall be called upon to make obeisance* (68:42).
He said, "His loincloth shall be raised from his leg? Glory be to my Lord most High!"

Author's comment: After relating this narration, al-Ṣadūq says, "Saying 'Glory be to my Lord most High' is a way of declaring God to be above having a leg (or any body part)." Al-Ḥalabī relates a similar narration from Imām al-Ṣādiq.

(3) In *Maʿānī* (*al-Akhbār*), it is related via a chain of narration from Muʿallā ibn Khanīs:
I (Muʿalla ibn Khanīs) asked Imām al-Ṣādiq, "What is the meaning of *and they were called upon to make obeisance indeed while yet they were safe* (68:43)? He said, "While they were able to do so."

(4) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from al-Bukhārī, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Mardawayh from Abū Saʿīd:
I heard the Prophet saying, "Our Lord shall bare His leg, and all the faithful men and women shall fall in obedience towards Him. Those

who used to make a pretence of prostrating in this world shall try to fall prostrate, but their backs will not bend."

(5) In the same source, it is related from Ibn Mandah, in refutation of the Jahmiyyah school of theology, from Abū Hurayrah:
The Messenger of God said, "*On the day when there shall be a severe affliction, and they shall be called upon to make obeisance, but they shall not be able* (68:42) (means that) God shall bare His leg."

(6) In the same source, it is related from ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd that the Prophet said:[1]
On the day of resurrection, God shall gather the people and descend in the clouds. A caller shall cry out, "O people! Do you agree to your Lord—who created you, shaped you, and sustained you—bringing you towards whoever you worshipped and approached while alive? Is that not justice from your Lord?"
They will say, "Yes."
Then, every person shall go towards whatever he used to worship, which will manifest in the form that they used to worship. So, a devil will take the form of Jesus for whoever used to worship Jesus, and a devil will take the form of ʿUzayr for whoever used to worship ʿUzayr. This will continue until devils appear as trees, sticks, and rocks. Only the people of Islam will remain standing, waiting for their Lord—the Mighty and Glorious—to manifest to them.
They will be asked, "What is wrong with you—why have you not moved along like the other people?"
They will say, "We have a Lord whom we not yet seen."
"So how would you recognize your Lord if you saw him?"
They will say, "There is a sign through which we can know and recognize Him."
"And what is that?"
"His shank shall be bared (*yukshafu ʿan sāq*)."
At that, (God's) shank shall be bared, and they shall each fall down obediently in prostration, except for a group whose backs will be (stiff) like cow horns; they will want to fall prostrate but will be unable."

Author's comment: These three narrations, which indicate that God has a form, conflict with both reason and the Qur'an. Therefore, they should be

1 This is related from Isḥāq ibn Rāhawayh in his Musnad, ʿAbd ibn Ḥamīd, Ibn Abī Dunyā, al-Ṭabarānī, al-Ājurrī in al-Sharīʿah, al-Dāraqūṭnī in al-Ruʾyah, al-Ḥākim (who authenticated it), Ibn Mardawayh, al-Bayhaqī in al-Baʿth, from ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās, from the Prophet.

rejected or taken metaphorically.

(7) In *Al-Kāfī*, it is related via a chain of narration from Sufyān ibn al-Samṭ that Imām al-Ṣādiq said:
When God wills good for a servant, He lets him sin, then follows it with retribution, and reminds him to seek forgiveness. And when God wants ill for a servant, he lets him sin, then follows it with a blessing so that the person forgets to seek repentance; this continues for a long time. This is what God says in: *We will overtake them by degrees...* (68:44).

Author's comment: Some narrations about being gradually led to perdition (*istidrāj*) were mentioned at the end of the exegesis of 7:182 (*We draw them near* (*to destruction*) *by degrees from whence they know not*).

(8) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, regarding *when he cried while he was in distress* (makẓūm) (68:48), it is related from Abū al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqir: (*Makẓūm* means) "sad."

(9) In the same source, it is related regarding *Were it not that favor from his Lord had overtaken him* (68:49): 'Favor' (*niʿmah*) means "mercy."

(10) In the same source, it is related regarding *he would certainly have been cast down upon the naked ground* (68:49):
A place which has no roof.

(11) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is related from al-Bukhārī from Ibn ʿAbbās that the Prophet said regarding *And those who disbelieve would almost smite you with their eyes* (68:51): The evil eye is a reality.

(12) In the same source, it is related from Abū Nuʿaym in *al-Ḥilyah*, from Jābir, that the Prophet said: The evil eye brings a man to his grave, and a camel to a pot.

Author's comment: There are narrations which explain the previous verses in the context of *wilāyah* (allegiance to God or the Prophet and his family). They are applications of the verses but not general exegesis; for that reason, we have not mentioned them.

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End of Chapter 68

Chapter 69

Sūrah Al-Ḥāqqah (The Inevitable)

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

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Introduction

The sūrah refers to *Al-Ḥāqqah* (The Inevitable), which is another name for the Day of Resurrection. It has been termed in other instances as *Al-Qāriʿah* (The Catastrophe) and *Al-Wāqiʿah* (The Imminent) as well.

The discourse within the sūrah is divided into three distinct sections: the first provides a general account of the communities that rejected the truth of Resurrection and were consequently met with a severe punishment from God; the second describes "The Inevitable" (*Al-Ḥāqqah*), detailing the division of people into two groups, those on the right who will experience happiness, and those on the left who will endure sorrow; the third reinforces the veracity of the Qur'an's information regarding Resurrection, emphasizing that it is an absolute certainty. The sūrah's Meccan origin is indicated by the themes and context of its verses.

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Verses 1-12

الْحَاقَّةُ ﴿١﴾ مَا الْحَاقَّةُ ﴿٢﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحَاقَّةُ ﴿٣﴾

(69:1-3) The Inevitable! What is the Inevitable?! What will show you (or make you know) what is the Inevitable?!

Al-Hāqqah refers to the grand Day of Resurrection, named for its indisputable and absolute certainty, derived from the root *haqq*, which signifies firm establishment and an undeniable reality.

The word "*ma*" (what) in the phrase "*what is Al-Hāqqah*" is used interrogatively to emphasize the enormity and significance of the event. The verse deliberately employs a noun in place of a pronoun to underscore its importance, thus it does not say "what it is," and the interrogative phrase serves as the predicate for *Al-Hāqqah*.

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The statements, "*the Inevitable, what is the Inevitable*?" serve to magnify the concept of the Day of Resurrection, enhancing the stature and profound reality of it with each iteration.

Furthermore, the verse "*What will show you what is the Inevitable*?" rhetorically denies the listener's knowledge of the true nature of that day. This mode of expression symbolizes the supreme significance and the apex of sublimity of the event. This may align with what has been attributed to Ibn Abbas: that in the Qur'an, whenever it states "What will make you know," it implies that God has indeed made him understand, and wherever it states "What do you know," it suggests that the matter has been withheld. In essence, "What will make you know" indicates a metaphorical understanding, whereas "What do you know" is declarative.

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ وَعَادٌ بِالْقَارِعَةِ ﴿٤﴾

(69:4) Thamūd and 'Ad denied the Catastrophe...

The "Catastrophe" (*Al-Qāri'ah*, in this verse) refers to the Day of Resurrection, termed as such for its impact—it rattles and ravages the heavens, earth, repositioning mountains, wrapping the sun, eclipsing the moon, dispersing the stars, and subduing all entities as affirmed by the (various) verses. Notably, the narrative chooses the explicit "the Catastrophe " instead of a pronoun, accentuating the event's overwhelming scale and importance, although one might expect a simpler phrase such as "Thamūd and 'Ad denied it."

This verse, along with the subsequent eight, may superficially recount the tales of Noah's people, 'Ad, Thamūd, Pharaoh, their predecessors, and the Overturned Cities, and their destruction. However, its essence is an elucidation of the "Catastrophe" through various depictions: the Almighty obliterated numerous nations for their rejection of it, thus providing a tangible response to the interrogative "*What is the Inevitable?*" Similarly, the verses that follow, starting with "*When the Trumpet is blown with a single blast*," present another perspective of this answer.

Thus the meaning of the verse is: "The Catastrophe (that is, the Day of Resurrection), which was denied by Thamūd, 'Ad, Pharaoh, those before them, the people of Lot (*al-Mu'tafikāt*[1]), and Noah's people, became the cause of their divine extermination, an absolute obliteration as a result of their denial."

فَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَأُهْلِكُوا بِالطَّاغِيَةِ ﴿٥﴾

(69:5) As for Thamūd, they were destroyed by the Cry.

This provides a detailed account of the consequences of their denial of the

1 *al-Mu'tafikāt* means "the towns that were overturned" referring to the towns of the people of Prophet Lot. See also verse 9:70. (Trans.)

"catastrophe." The term *al-ṭāghiyah*[1] (translated here as "the Cry") signifies either the piercing blast, the violent earthquake, or the devastating thunderbolt, as the Qur'an varies in its description of the cause of their destruction in their narrative. The Qur'an recounts: "*The Cry seized those who were wrongdoers, and they lay lifeless prostrate in their homes*" (11:67); it further mentions: "*So the earthquake seized them, and they lay lifeless prostrate in their homes*" (7:78); and also proclaims: "*So the bolt of a humiliating punishment seized them*" (41:17).

There is an opinion that the term *al-ṭāghiyah* (the Cry) in the context of Thamūd's destruction refers to their own transgression and this is supported by His statement: "*Thamūd denied their prophet by their transgression*" (91:11). This view suggests that Thamūd's destruction came as a consequence of their own tyrannical behavior or excesses.

The first of the two interpretation aligns more congruently with the context of the subsequent verses, which elucidate the modes of their ruin, be it by wind, a punishing grasp, or the deluge of water. Hence, the reference to Thamūd's end by "the Cry" pertains to the method of their destruction.

وَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَأُهْلِكُوا بِرِيحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ ﴿٦﴾

(69:6) And as for 'Ad, they were destroyed by a fierce icy gale,

The term *ṣarṣar* denotes a bitterly cold wind that is extremely strong and gusty, and the word *'ātiah* is derived from *al-'utū*, which connotes tyranny (or transgression), indicating a force that deviates from obedience and the expected order of nature.

سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَثَمَانِيَةَ أَيَّامٍ حُسُومًا فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيهَا صَرْعَى كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ ﴿٧﴾

(69:7) which He disposed against them for seven successive nights and eight days, so that you could have seen the people lying about therein prostrate as if they were hollow trunks of palm trees.

"*He disposed against them*" signifies exerting control over them. The term *ḥasūm* (decisive) is the plural of *ḥāsim* (determining or concluding), which is akin to how *shuhūd* (witnesses) is the plural of *shāhid* (witness), originating from *ḥasm* (severance), which denotes successive branding or cutting, continuously. This description characterizes the seven nights and eight days as unrelenting and successive. The word *ṣar'ā* (prostrates) is the plural of *ṣarī'* (one

1 The term *al-ṭāghiyah* comes from the root *ṭaghā*, which means to transgress or to exceed the limits. (Trans.)

who has prostrated or fallen), and *a'jāz* (trunks) is the plural of *'ujz*, indicating the extremity or end of something. The term *khāwiyah* conveys emptiness or hollowness, referring to the void within and cast aside. The meaning is clear.

فَهَلْ تَرَى لَهُم مِّن بَاقِيَةٍ ﴿٨﴾

(69:8) So do you see any trace of them?

In other words, "do you see any surviving individual?" This phrase is an idiom expressing the totality of their annihilation. Some have interpreted *bāqiyah* (trace) as a verbal noun signifying endurance or continuation, referring to what remains. However, the previously mentioned interpretation, indicating complete destruction, is more fitting to the context.

وَجَاءَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَن قَبْلَهُ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَاتُ بِالْخَاطِئَةِ ﴿٩﴾

(69:9) Then brought Pharaoh and those who were before him, and the towns that were overturned, iniquity.

Here, "Pharaoh" refers specifically to the Pharaoh at the time of Moses, "*those who were before him*" denotes the nations of disbelievers who existed prior to his time, and "*the towns that were overturned*" allude to the towns of Prophet Lot's people and their inhabitants. The term "iniquity" (*khāṭi'ah*) is a gerund that denotes wrongdoing or going astray, indicating that their arrival was marked by straying from the path of servitude to God. The remaining implications are clear.

فَعَصَوْا رَسُولَ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَهُمْ أَخْذَةً رَّابِيَةً ﴿١٠﴾

(69:10) Then they disobeyed the messenger of their Lord, so He seized them with a terrible seizing.

The word 'disobeyed' pertains to Pharaoh, his predecessors, and the inhabitants of the overturned towns (that is, the people of Lot). 'The messenger' here is used in a general sense for messengers of God. '*Rābiyah*' (terrible) indicates an increase, hence, *'a terrible seizing'* suggests a punishment of extreme severity. Some commentaries suggest it implies a punishment surpassing all others in its intensity, and others interpret it as a punishment that is exceptional, defying ordinary expectations.

إِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَى الْمَاء حَمَلْنَاكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ ﴿١١﴾

(69:11) Indeed when the Flood rose high, We carried you in a floating ark,

This alludes to the deluge of Noah. The term *jāriyah* refers to the ark.

Although the direct addressees are described as being carried in Noah's ark (as in *We carried you*), it was, in fact, their ancestors who were aboard. This is because humanity is seen as a single entity; hence, the experiences of a part are ascribed to the entire group. The rest of the meaning is evident.

لِنَجْعَلَهَا لَكُمْ تَذْكِرَةً وَتَعِيَهَا أُذُنٌ وَاعِيَةٌ ﴿١٢﴾

(69:12) that We might make it a reminder for you, and that receptive ears might remember it.

This passage elucidates the earlier expression "*We carried you*" (69:11) and the pronoun "We" in the subsequent phrase "*We might make it*" denotes the action of carrying. It signifies: Through Our act of carrying, We intended to create an event that you would retain as a remembrance, as a lesson to bear in mind, and as a counsel for contemplation and vigilance.

The expression, "*and that receptive ears might remember it*" refers to the concept of comprehension, akin to placing something in a container, and the intended meaning of "*receptive ears*" is that one should firmly embed and safeguard the message within oneself, ensuring that its purpose—to serve as a reminder and a lesson—is realized.

To clarify this, there is an ongoing universal divine precedent in the universe to guide each type of creature towards its perfection, appropriate to its unique existence, by endowing it with the necessary means to propel it towards its goal. This is supported by the verses, "*Who gave everything its creation, then guided it*" (20:50), and "*Who created and proportioned, Who determined and guided*" (87:3). This concept has been previously explained in the exegesis of Sūrah Taha, Al-A'la, among others.

Human beings share with all other material beings the aspect of attaining formative completion and following an existential conduct toward their ultimate existential perfection under the divine guidance that directs them to their intended goal. What sets humans apart is their capacity to achieve completion through divine legislation. This is realized through the human soul's development via its voluntary acts, through the qualities and attributes it adopts, and through the dispositions and states it experiences in this worldly life. These aspects constitute the ultimate purpose of human existence, allowing for an eternal and blissful existence.

This is the impetus for legislating the shariah through the dispatch of messengers, the revelation of the scriptures, and guidance towards it as highlighted by the verse: "*So that mankind may not have any argument against Allah after the* (*sending of the*) *the messengers*" (4:165). This concept has been elaborated upon in the discussions of prophethood in the second volume of the book and

other places. Such guidance is meant to illuminate the path and to declare the straight path which humans have no choice but to follow. The Qur'an asserts, "*Indeed, We have guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful*" (76:3). Adherence to and following this path ensures a life of goodness and happiness, whereas turning away leads to eternal misery, with conclusive proof established against the individual regardless of the outcome, as the Qur'an proclaims: "*So that he who perishes might perish by a manifest proof, and he who lives may live on by a manifest proof*" (8:42).

Once this is established, it is evident that divine precedent involves guiding humanity towards the fulfillment of their lives by revealing the path to achieve it. This is alluded to in the phrase, "*We might make it a reminder for you*." A reminder does not inherently guarantee remembrance in those it is intended for; it can sometimes resonate and at other times be ignored.

In the scheme of divine precedent, the guidance of all things to their destined completeness is essential, a process that entails guiding and steering them to their ultimate state of completion. This is alluded to in the words, "*and that receptive ears might remember it*." Here, the mentioned remembrance or awareness is an exemplification of this divine guidance. Yet, God did not attribute this act of remembrance to Himself as He does with the act of reminding (in the clause, *We might make it a reminder for you*,). The reminder's objective is to complete the proof, which is an action of God. In contrast, the act of remembering, while it could be attributed to the Divine just as it could to humans, is couched within the framework of an invitation and the ensuing explication of rewards for responding to this invitation. Rewards and acknowledgments follow the act of remembering, considered as the individual's deed, and thus attributed to their initiative, not directly to God Himself.

And it appears from the verse that external events have an influence on human actions, as evident from the likes of His statement: "*If the people of the towns had been faithful and Godwary, We would have opened to them blessings from heaven and earth*" (7:96), which also indicates that human actions can affect external events, and some discussion on this has previously been mentioned.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn al-Mundhir narrates from Ibn Jurayj regarding the verse: "*We might make it a reminder for you*" he said: (The reminder is) for the Ummah of Muḥammad, and how many a ship has perished and traces have vanished meaning what remained of the ship until it was found by the Ummah of Muḥammad and they saw its planks visible on al-Jūdi.

Author's comment: And what supports this has been preceded in the story of Noah in the exegesis of Sūrah Hūd.

(2) In the same source, Saʿīd b. Manṣūr, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Mardawayh narrate from Makḥūl who said: When the verse "*and that receptive ears might remember it*" was revealed, the Messenger of God said: I asked my Lord to grant me a "receptive ear.[1]" Makḥūl said: Hence, ʿAlī used to say: I have never forgotten anything I heard from the Messenger of God.

(3) In the same source, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Wāhidī, Ibn Mardawayh, Ibn ʿAsākir, and Ibn al-Najjārī narrate from Buraydah who said: The Messenger of God said to ʿAlī: Verily, God has commanded me to bring you close and not to distance you, and to teach you that you may understand, and it is your right to understand, thus this verse was revealed: "*and that receptive ears might remember it.*"

(4) In the same source, Abū Naʿīm in *al-Ḥilyah* narrates from ʿAlī who said: The Messenger of God said: O ʿAlī, verily God has commanded me to bring you close and to teach you so that you may understand, hence this verse was revealed: "And let there be a listening ear present"; you are the listening ear for my knowledge.

Author's comment: And this meaning has been narrated in the exegesis of *al-Burhān*, by Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allāh with his chain from Abū ʿAbdillāh, and from al-Kulaynī with his chain from him, and from Ibn Bābawayh with his chain from Jābir from Abū Jaʿfar. And it was also narrated by Ibn Shahrāshūb in *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'* from ʿUmar b. ʿAlī, and from al-Wāhidī in *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* from Buraydah, and from Abū al-Qāsim b. Ḥabīb in his exegesis from Zur b. Ḥubaysh from ʿAlī. And it has been narrated in *Ghāyat al-Marām*, from the paths of both factions, sixteen hadiths on this topic and it is said in *al-Burhān* that Muḥammad b. al-ʿAbbās narrated therein thirty hadiths sourced from both general (broadly accepted traditions) and from specific ones (acknowledged within certain groups).

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1 A request for a "receptive ear" is metaphorical for a profound ability to listen and comprehend." (Trans.)

Verses 13-37

This section represents the second set of verses that describe "The Inevitable" (*al-Hāqqah*) along with some of its signs and provides a summary of the events that transpire during it.

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ نَفْخَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ ﴿١٣﴾

(69:13) When the Trumpet is blown with a single blast

It has been explained previously that the act of blowing of the Trumpet symbolizes the resurrection and the gathering for the final judgment. The singular nature of the blast signifies the conclusive and powerful execution of God's decree without any weakness such that there is no need for a repeat of the blast. From the context of the verses, it is understood to refer to the second blast, which is the one that revives the dead.

وَحُمِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَاحِدَةً ﴿١٤﴾

(69:14) and the earth and the mountains are lifted and levelled with a single leveling,

This describes the utter destruction as the most severe form of leveling, where the earth and mountains are broken down into minute pieces. The carrying of the earth and mountains refers to God's all-encompassing power, and the "single leveling" highlights the swiftness of their obliteration, so swift that a second act of leveling is unnecessary.

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ ﴿١٥﴾

(69:15) then, on that day, will the Imminent (Hour) befall

The term 'the Imminent' refers to the establishment of the Day of Resurrection.

وَانشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاهِيَةٌ ﴿١٦﴾

(69:16) and the sky will be split open —for it will be frail that day—

The splitting of something means parting one segment from another. The term 'frail' suggests a state of weakness. Alternatively, it is described as akin to the tearing of leather or cloth.

The verse, "*and the sky will be split open —for it will be frail that day*," followed by "*and the angels will be all over it*" (69:17) could correspond in meaning to the verse "*The day when the sky with its clouds will split open and the angels*

will be sent down (*in a majestic*) *descent*" (25:25).[1]

وَالْمَلَكُ عَلَىٰ أَرْجَائِهَا وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَانِيَةٌ ﴿١٧﴾

(69:17) and the angels will be on the sides thereof, and above them the Throne of your Lord will be borne that day by eight.

Al-Rāghib said: "The term *raja* refers to the edge of the well, and the sky, and others besides them are its side, and the plural is *arjā* (corners, sides). God says: "*and the angels will be on the sides thereof* (arjā'ihā)." It has been said that *al-malik* (the angels) is used for singular and plural and what is meant in the verse is plural."

As for the phrase, "*and above them the Throne of your Lord will be borne that day by eight*," the pronoun *fawqahum* (above them) is commonly understood within the context to refer to the angels, though some say it refers to others.

The apparent meaning of the verse is: The Throne of your Lord that day has bearers among the angels as God has said: "*Those who bear the Throne, and those around it, celebrate the praise of their Lord and have faith in Him*" (40:7). Some narrations have mentioned that they are four, yet what is apparent from the statement, "*the Throne of your Lord will be borne that day by eight*" is that the bearers on that day are eight. The question remains whether these bearers are angels of from others? The verse is silent about this, although the context hints that they may well be angels.

It is possible—as alluded to earlier—that the mention of the sky splitting, angels positioned at its sides, and that there will be eight bearers of the Throne, might be intended to illustrate the visibility of angels, the sky, and the Throne to humans on that day. The Qur'an clarifies this vision: "*And you will see the angels surrounding the Throne, celebrating the praise of their Lord*" (39:75).

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُونَ لَا تَخْفَىٰ مِنكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ ﴿١٨﴾

(69:18) That day you will be exposed: none of your secrets will remain hidden.

This suggests presentation before God. It echoes the verse, "*And they will be set before your Lord in ranks*" (18:48), illustrating a metaphor of a merchant displaying goods openly to a buyer. On the Day of Judgment, the exposition before God will reveal all human possessions in beliefs and actions, leaving no hidden belief or action obscured. It aligns with the transformation from the unseen to the witnessed and the covert to the overt, as affirmed by "*On the day*

1 This suggests a parallel in the imagery of the sky being rent and the presence of angels during these momentous events. (Trans.)

when the innermost thoughts will be examined" (86:9) and "*On the day they will appear before God, with nothing concealed from Him*" (40:16).

In our earlier discussions, we've established that the attributes of the Day of Judgment listed in God's discourse—such as God's sole kingdom, His supreme command, the inevitability of His ruling, and the emergence of all creation in full transparency before Him—are eternally affirmed attributes of God. The intent is to highlight that, on that day, these realities will be unveiled without any concealment or uncertainty.

The essence therefore is: On that day, it will be apparent that you are presented before God's all-encompassing knowledge, and every concealed action of yours will be revealed.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَيَقُولُ هَاؤُمُ اقْرَؤُوا كِتَابِيَهْ ﴿١٩﴾

(69:19) As for him who is given his book in his right hand, he will say, 'Here, take and read my book!

It is explained in *al-Mujam*: *hā'um* (Here) is a command addressed to a group similar to saying *hākum* (here you are). You would say to an individual man: *hā yā rajul* (Here O man) and to two men: *ha'umā yā rijalān* (Here you two, O men) and to a group of men: *hā'um yā rijāl* (Here, O men) and to an individual woman: *hā' yā imra'ah* (here, O woman)[1] and to two women: *hā'umā* (Here you two) and to a group of women: *hā'unn* (Here you all). This form of address is typical of the dialect from the Hijaz region.

The tribes of Tamim and Qays use "Here, O man" in the same way as the Hijazi people, *hā yā rajul*. They say *hā'ā* for two individuals, *hā'ū* for a group, *hā'ī* for a single woman, and *hā'unn* when addressing multiple women.

Some Arab groups prefer using *kaf* instead of *hamza*, articulating *hāk* for an individual, *hākumā* for two, *hākum* for a group, *hāk* for a woman, *hākumā* for two women, and *hākun* for multiple women. These terms convey the action of taking or accepting something and are used to address commands rather than prohibitions.

The verse in question, along with the subsequent lines until "*the iniquitous*," (69:20-37) elaborates on the distinct conditions of people on that day, divided between happiness and misery. This has been preceded by a detailed exegesis of the verse, "*So whoever is given his book in his right hand*" from 17:71, which discussed the significance of receiving the book in the right hand. It appears that the phrase "*Here, take and read my book*" is addressing the angels.

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1 Meaning, the '*hamza*' is pronounced with an '*e*' sound and not '*ya*' following it. (Auth.)

The '*hā*' in "my book" (*kitābīyah*) and in similar positions in the following verses serves as a pause for rest, known as the '*hā*' of respite.

The meaning is thus: As for the one who receives his book in his right hand, he will say to the angels, "Take this and read my book," signifying that the book decrees his felicity.

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إِنِّي ظَنَنتُ أَنِّي مُلاقٍ حِسَابِيَهْ ﴿٢٠﴾

(69:20) Indeed I knew that I shall encounter my account.'

The phrase "*Indeed I knew*" conveys a sense of certainty. This verse explains the rationale introduced in the preceding one. The essence is: my book was designated as that of the right hand which dictates my felicity due to my firm conviction in the worldly life that I would face my reckoning. As a result, I placed my trust in my Lord and conscientiously minded my deeds.[1]

فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ ﴿٢١﴾

(69:21) So he will have a pleasant life,

The verse implies a life that satisfies him, assigning pleasure to life as a form of intellectual metaphor.

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فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

(69:22) in an elevated garden,

This verse signifies his abode in a sublime paradise offering delights unfathomable to sight, unheard by the ear, and inconceivable to human perception.

قُطُوفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

(69:23) whose clusters (of fruits) will be within easy reach.

This describes how the fruits in paradise are presented in easy reach, illustrating the ease and comfort that awaits in the afterlife. The term '*qutūf*' (clusters) is the plural of '*qutf*' (cluster) and refers to bunches of fruit signifying abundance and accessibility. The description implies that the inhabitants of paradise can effortlessly enjoy the fruits at their leisure.

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كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا أَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الْأَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ ﴿٢٤﴾

(69:24) (He will be told): 'Enjoy your food and drink, for what you had sent in advance in past days.'

This verse addresses the recipients: enjoy the variety of foods and drinks

1 This is also includes following the rightful Imam of his time. (Trans.)

available, which are now made delightful for you in return for the faith and righteous actions you carried out in the world, whose days are now over.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَابِيَهْ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَلَمْ أَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيَهْ ﴿٢٦﴾

(69:25-26) But as for him who is given his book in his left hand, he will say, 'I wish I had not been given my book, nor had I ever known what my account is!

This refers to the second category of people: the wretched criminals who are handed their record of deeds in their left hands. The meaning of this has been previously discussed in (the exegesis of) Sūrah Al-Isra.[1] These individuals yearn for the impossibility of not having been presented with their records and not having realized their accounts due to the severe torment awaiting them that they now witness.

يَا لَيْتَهَا كَانَتِ الْقَاضِيَةَ ﴿٢٧﴾

(69:27) I wish death had been the end of it all!

The pronoun "it" (in the phrase, *the end of it*) refers to the first death experienced by humans in this world, as mentioned (by commentators).

The meaning of the verse is: "Oh I wish the death I previously experienced had been the final, resulting in my annihilation so that I would not have been revived. Such a finality would have prevented me from facing the perpetual torment and witnessing what I now perceive.

مَا أَغْنَى عَنِّي مَالِيَهْ ﴿٢٨﴾ هَلَكَ عَنِّي سُلْطَانِيَهْ ﴿٢٩﴾

(69:28-29) My wealth did not avail me. My authority has departed from me.'

This reflects deep remorse spoken by one who realizes the emptiness of his worldly pursuits. He had believed that wealth and power were the safeguards of his happiness, protecting him from misfortune and granting him control over his desires. In pursuit of these, he neglected his duty to his Lord, ignored the call to truth, and dismissed the message of the summoner. However, faced with the ultimate disconnection of all means and standing on a day when neither wealth nor offspring can be of any use, he mourns the ineffectiveness of his wealth and the dissolution of his power. And of what benefit is the regret?"[2]

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1 See English Vol. 25 under verses 17:71-72. (Trans.)

2 The individual's lamentation in this passage underscores a profound transformation—a realization that material success is ephemeral and, ultimately, powerless in the face of existential truths. The Qur'an frequently alludes to the

خُذُوهُ فَغُلُّوهُ ﴿٣٠﴾ ثُمَّ الْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ ﴿٣١﴾ ثُمَّ فِي سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوهُ ﴿٣٢﴾

(69:30-32) (The angels will be told:) 'Seize him, and fetter him! Then put him into hell. Then, in a chain whose length is seventy cubits, bind him.

This recounts the Almighty's directive to the angels to apprehend the individual and to consign him to the fire. The presumed context is the angels being ordered to 'seize him,' etc. The phrase "*fetter him*" stems from *'al-ghal*,' (pronounced with an open 'a,') signifying the act of binding with a shackle that connects the hands, feet, and neck.

Further, the verse "*Then put him into hell*" signifies the command to thrust him into the formidable fire and compel him to it.

Regarding the verse, "*Then, in a chain whose length is seventy cubits, bind him*," the term 'chain' refers to a shackle, and 'cubit' is a unit of length. A 'cubit' specifically measures the distance from the elbow to the fingertips, which is used as a standard measure of length. Thus, the directive is to confine him within a shackle measuring seventy cubits in length."

إِنَّهُ كَانَ لا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلا يَحُضُّ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ ﴿٣٤﴾

(69:33-34) Indeed he had no faith in Allah, the All-supreme, and he did not urge the feeding of the needy,

In this context, "urging" (*he did not urge*) refers to the act of inciting and enticing. These verses serve to justify the order (in the preceding verses) to apprehend (the iniquitous) and consign into the fire. The order to seize and then to consign into the fire, followed by the binding through chains, is given because he neither believed in God the Great nor encouraged the feeding of the poor, which indicates his apathy towards the needy and his disregard for their suffering.

فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هَاهُنَا حَمِيمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَلا طَعَامٌ إِلاَّ مِنْ غِسْلِينٍ ﴿٣٦﴾ لا يَأْكُلُهُ إِلاَّ الْخَاطِؤُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

(69:35-37) so he has no friend here today, nor any food except pus, which no one shall eat except the iniquitous.'

The term *ḥamīm* ("friend") refers to an intimate friend. This verse (69:35)

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notion that wealth and progeny, often prized as symbols of worldly achievement, cannot alter one's ultimate standing before God. In this context, the passage serves as a cautionary tale reminding us of the transitory nature of worldly endeavors and the paramount importance of spiritual accountability. (Trans.)

branches from the previous discourse which states, "*Indeed he had no faith*," elaborating that since he lacked faith in God the Great, he lacks a beneficial friend today—essentially, there is no one to intercede on his behalf because a disbeliever receives no forgiveness and, consequently, no intercession.[1]

Further, the verse "*Nor any food except pus*," where "pus" symbolizes the discharges from the bodies of the inhabitants of hell. This statement builds on the prior reference to "an intimate friend" and is related to the previous verse's phrase, "*he did not urge the feeding of the needy*." The gist is that since he did not encourage feeding the poor, his only sustenance now is the abhorrent discharge of the people of hell.

The verse, "*which no one shall eat except the iniquitous*" characterizes the discharge, with "iniquitous" denoting those who are mired in sin and transgression.

Examining Narrations:

(1) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, regarding the exalted verse: "*the Throne of your Lord will be borne that day by eight*," Ibn Jarir extracted from Ibn Zayd who said: The Messenger of God stated: "Today, four bear it, but on the Day of Resurrection, eight will."

Author's comment: The specification of the bearers in the verse with "that day" hints, indeed demonstrates, that the number is particular to the Day of Resurrection.

(2) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, another narration states: "Eight will carry it, four from the former ones and four from the latter ones." As for the four former ones, they are Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. And the latter four are Muḥammad, ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn.

Author's comment: In more than one narration, it is mentioned that the eight are specific to the Day of Resurrection, and in some, that the bearers of the throne—and the throne signifies knowledge—"are four of us and four whom God wills."

(3) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, from Abū Baṣīr from Abū ʿAbd Allah who said: "On the Day of Resurrection, every group will be called by the leader of their time. If their leader is confirmed (to be rightful), they will receive their book in their right hand, as stated: "*The day We will summon every group of people with their imam...*" (17:71). Those given their book in their right hand will read their record, with the 'right hand' signifying the confirmation of the leader, as it is his book that he reads." He (the Imām) continued: "And those who deny are among the People of the Left Hand whom God has said: '*And the People of the Left Hand—what*

1 The forgiveness here is particular to the Day of Judgment. (Trans.)

are the People of the Left Hand? Amid infernal miasma and boiling water and the shadow of dense black smoke...'" (56:41-43).

Author's comment: In several narrations, the verse: "*As for him who is given his book in his right hand...*," is applied to ʿAlī, and in some, to him and his followers, as well as the verse: " *But as for him who is given his book in his left hand...*," to his enemies. These are among the narratives that precede traditional interpretation.

(4) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Hakim authenticated a narration from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri about the Prophet: If a bucket of discharges (from the inmates of the fire) were spilled in this world, it would foul the earth with its stench.

(5) In the same source, al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab al-Īmān* related from Sa'sa'ah bin Suhan who said: A Bedouin came to ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭālib and asked: "How about this verse: '*No one shall eat except the iniquitous*?'" By God, everyone stumbles. ʿAlī smiled and said: "O Bedouin, '*No one shall eat except the iniquitous*,'" and he affirmed, "By God, O Commander of the Faithful, God would not neglect his servant." Then ʿAlī turned to Abu al-Aswad and said: "Foreign languages have entered into the religion entirely, so set something for people that they may use to correct their speech," and he outlined for them the raising (nominative), the subjecting (accusative), and the lowering (genitive).

(6) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, from Ibn Bābawayh in *al-Durūʿ al-Wāqiya* in a narration about the Prophet: If an arm's length of the chain mentioned by God in His book (69:32) were placed upon all the mountains of the world, they (that is, the mountains) would melt from its heat.

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Verses 38-52

This segment represents the third section of the chapter's verses, reaffirming the prior mentions of the event known as *al-Hāqqah* (The Inevitable). It employs the confirming language of the Noble Qur'an to underscore the veracity of the information provided about the Day of Resurrection.

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فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمَا لَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

(69:38-39) I swear by what you see and what you do not see:

The verse clearly takes an oath by all that is visible and that which is not visible to them, namely, the seen and the unseen realms. This encompasses the entirety of creation but expressly excludes His transcendent Essence. It is far from the Qur'an's dignified etiquette to place the Creator and the creation on equal footing or to jointly exalt them both in the same breath. The Exalted, in His majesty, and what He has wrought, are not to be revered in a common display of glorification.

Such an oath exemplifies the grandeur and reverence of what is sworn upon and His exalted creation, as it is inherently dignified and beautiful, reflecting that God, the Exalted, is the epitome of beauty and produces only what is beautiful. This is exemplified in His words: "*Who perfected everything He created*" (32:7), and "*So blessed is Allah, the best of creators*" (23:14), asserting that only beauty emanates from God and any displeasure arises from themselves and relative comparisons.[1]

The choice to swear by what is visible and invisible underscores the Qur'an's veracity, illustrating the cohesive system pervading the universe, which signifies His unity and the destiny of all things returning to Him. This underlying principle is the rationale for sending messengers, revealing scriptures, and positioning the Qur'an as the best Heavenly Book and the ultimate guidance towards the truth and a straight path.

From the above, it becomes evident, therefore, that interpreting what is seen and unseen as referring to the creation and the creator, or to apparent and hidden blessings, or to entities like jinn, humans, and angels, or the dichotomy of the physical and spiritual, or to this life and the hereafter, is misconstrued. The phrase is broader in implication than all such specifics.[2]

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1 This conveys the message that an oath in the Qur'an serves to magnify and honor the entity it concerns, which in this context, is God's creation. It reflects the concept that all creation is inherently dignified and beautiful because it is a reflection of God, who is described as the essence of beauty. (Trans.)

2 The gist of this discussion is that the terms "seen" and "unseen" encompass more

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ قَلِيلا مَا تُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

(69:40-41) it is indeed the speech of a noble messenger, and it is not the speech of a poet. Little is the faith that you have!

This refers to the Qur'an. The context suggests that the "*noble messenger*" alluded to here is the Prophet Muhammad. This serves to affirm his prophethood against those who disparaged him as merely a poet or a soothsayer.

Attributing the Qur'an to the Prophet's speech is appropriate because the attribution is made in his capacity as a messenger. A messenger conveys only what is revealed by the sender, a point eloquently emphasized in the subsequent verse, "*Gradually sent down from the Lord of all the worlds.*"

Some have interpreted the "*noble messenger*" to mean the angel Gabriel, but this is not substantiated by the context. Had Gabriel been the subject, it would have been more appropriate to address the claim that devils had brought the revelation, as was addressed in the chapter of Al-Shu'ara.[1]

Moreover, his subsequent saying: "*And if he had made up some sayings in Our name*" and what follows it is only fitting if the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) is the intended noble messenger.

Additionally, the verse that follows, "*Had he faked any sayings in Our name*," and the verses thereafter, are congruent with the understanding that the Prophet Muhammad is indeed the "noble messenger" referred to.

The statement, "*and it is not the speech of a poet. Little is the faith that you have*!," categorically refutes the notion that the Qur'an could be the work of a poet, emphasizing that the Prophet Muhammad neither composed poetry nor was he known as a poet.

The phrase "*Little is the faith that you*" serves as a reprimand to the prevailing disbelief within their community, highlighting that only a minority embraced faith, while the majority remained in disbelief.

وَلا بِقَوْلِ كَاهِنٍ قَلِيلا مَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

(69:42) Nor is it the speech of a soothsayer. Little is the admonition

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than the specific dualities often attributed to them. The phrase in question is indeed broader and not confined to the mentioned interpretation. (Trans.)

1 The verses (26:210-212) explicitly refute the claim that devils had brought down the revelation, a point that some commentators suggest would be more directly addressed if the "noble messenger" mentioned elsewhere referred to the angel Gabriel. This particular passage in Sūrah Al-Shu'ara serves as a counter-argument to those who claimed that the Prophet Muhammad's revelations were inspired by devils or other supernatural beings rather than from a divine source. (Trans.)

that you take!

This verse firmly rejects the claim that the Qur'an is the product of soothsaying and that the Prophet Muhammad was a soothsayer who received the Qur'an from the jinn as they cast it to him. The phrase "*Little is the admonition that you take!*" acts as a criticism of their community, (indicating their lack of reflection and remembrance.)

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تَنزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

(69:43) Gradually sent down from the Lord of all the worlds.

The verse specifies that the Qur'an is divinely bestowed by the Lord of the worlds, and it is not a fabrication of the messenger. This attribution to God reaffirms what was earlier pointed out.

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ ﴿٤٤﴾ لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ ﴿٤٥﴾ ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾
فَمَا مِنكُم مِّنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

(69:44-47) Had he faked any sayings in Our name, We would have surely seized him by the right hand and then cut off his aorta, and none of you could have held Us off from him.

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It is said that fabricating a statement entails creating it oneself and then attributing it to another. The term *waṭīn* (aorta), as elucidated by al-Rāghib, refers to a vein that nourishes the liver; severing it results in the death of its owner. It is also commonly referred to as the artery of the heart.

These verses mean that if this noble messenger, entrusted with Our divine message and sent with the Qur'an that We have revealed, "*had he faked any sayings*" and falsely attributed them to Us, "*We would have surely seized him by the right hand*," suggesting the gripping of a perpetrator, or it implies the cutting off of his right hand, or it denotes that We would have exerted divine retribution with might, as per the narration of *Al-Qummi*, "*and then cut off his aorta* (waṭīn)," effectively ending his life for his falsehood. "*And none of you could have prevented it*," indicating that no one would be able to shield him from Our punishment and destruction.

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This passage presents a threat to the Prophet Muhammad, contingent upon the hypothetical scenario of him falsely attributing a lie to God—a lie which God did not utter—despite being a messenger graced with His prophethood and selected for His mission.

The significance of these verses parallels the sentiment expressed in God's words: "*Had We not fortified you, certainly you might have inclined toward them a bit. Then We have surely made you taste a double* (*punishment*) *in this life,*

and a double (*punishment*) *after death, and then you would not have found for yourself any helper against Us*" (17:74-75). This message is echoed in the context of Sūrah Al-An'am, where after recounting the immense blessings bestowed upon them, it is stated: "*But were they to ascribe any partners* (*to Allah*)*, what they used to do would not avail them*" (6:88).

The verses should not be misconstrued to mean that God would invariably destroy and inflict the severest punishment in this life on anyone who falsely claims prophethood and lies about God. This interpretation is refuted by the existence of some individuals who have falsely claimed to be prophets.

The admonition in the verse is specifically tailored to the genuine messenger, indicating that if he were to falsely ascribe to God things that are not of Him, then he would face the threatened consequences. This warning does not extend to every self-proclaimed prophet who lies about God in their claim to divine commission and their pronouncements supposedly on behalf of the Almighty.

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَذْكِرَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

(69:48) Indeed it is a reminder for the Godwary.

This verse serves as a reminder of the honor due to their piety and the knowledge of the origin and return in their true realities. It discloses to them their ranks with God and their standings in the afterlife, in heaven. Such a matter cannot be a product of fabrication or falsehood; therefore, the verse is posited as a rationale underscoring the Qur'an's purity from any fallacy or deceit.

وَإِنَّا لَنَعْلَمُ أَنَّ مِنكُم مُّكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَإِنَّهُ لَحَسْرَةٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

(69:49-50) Indeed We know that there are some among you who deny (it). And indeed it will be a (matter of) regret for the faithless.

This is foretelling the regret that will become evident to them on the day of ultimate remorse.

وَإِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ الْيَقِينِ ﴿٥١﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٥٢﴾

(69:51-52) It is indeed certain truth. So celebrate the Name of your Lord, the All-supreme.

This resonates with the previous discussion in the context of the two similar verses at the end of Sūrah Al-Waqi'ah. Both chapters are unified in their aim to depict the Day of Resurrection and are cohesive in the narrative of their respective endings, which emphasize the oath on the veracity of the Qur'an as the harbinger of the Day of Judgment. They both conclude with the assertion that

the revelations of the Qur'an concerning the Inevitable Event are the absolute truth, leading to the directive to glorify the name of the majestic Lord, who is transcendent beyond creating a world without purpose or a hereafter, and beyond nullifying the profound truths that the Qur'an imparts regarding the origin and ultimate return.

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About the Author

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, a distinguished Islamic scholar and thinker from the notable Ṭabāṭabāʾī family of Tabriz, Iran, was a descendant of the second Imam, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī. Born on March 17, 1904, he became an orphan at a young age. After completing his initial religious education in Tabriz, he moved to Najaf for advanced studies under prominent Shia scholars.

His teachers, particularly Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī, a revered philosopher, and Shaykh Nāʾīnī, a bold political thinker, greatly influenced him. ʿAllāmah's education was comprehensive, extending beyond jurisprudence to include philosophy, mathematics, and spirituality, the latter under the guidance of his relative, al-Sayyid ʿAlī al-Qāḍī.

After returning to Tabriz in 1934, ʿAllāmah's talents soon outgrew the city, prompting his move to Qum in 1945, where he taught until his death on November 15, 1981. His scholarly works, particularly his magnum opus, the 20-volume Qur'anic exegesis "*al-Mīzān*," earned him widespread acclaim. This work, unique for its method of interpreting the Qur'an with the Qur'an, solidified his academic prestige.

Among his other influential writings are a comparative study of Islamic philosophy and "Shiʿite Islam," commissioned to introduce Shia Islam to the Western world. His students, including the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, have carried on his intellectual legacy, shaping the current generation of religious leaders. ʿAllāmah's academic contributions continue to resonate in Islamic scholarship today.

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